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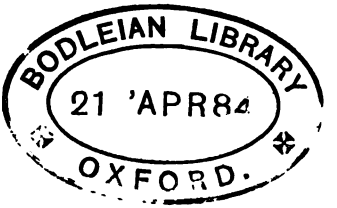

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DR. WAINWRIGHT'S PATIENT.

CHAPTER I.

CAPTAIN DERINZY'S RETREAT.

BEACHBOROUGH, where, in obedience to the strident voice of the railway porter—voice combining the hardness of the Dorset with the drawl of the Devon dialect—you, if you be so disposed, "Change for Sandington Cove and Waverley," is a very different place from what it was even ten years ago. To be sure the sea is there, and the beach, and the fishing-luggers with the red sails; but in everything else what changes! Now there is, as has been said, a railway-station, a forlorn little oasis of white planking in a desert of sandy heath, inhabited by a clerk—a London young man, who "went too fast" in the metropolis, and has been relegated to Beachborough as a good healthy place where there is no chance of temptation—and a porter, a native of the place, a muscular person great at wrestling, who is always inviting the male passers-by of his acquaintance to "come on," and supplying them, on their doing so, with a very ugly throw known as a "back-fall." There are not many passers-by, for the newly-formed road leads to no where in particular, and those who tramp through its winter slush, or struggle through its summer dust, are generally either tradesmen of the place anxious about overdue parcels, or servants, sent to make inquiries about the trains, from some of the houses on the Esplanade.

The Esplanade! Heavens! if old Miss Gollop, who lived

at the Baths, and who used to supply very hot water and very damp towels, and the greatest number of draughts ever known to be got together into one small room, to the half-dozen county families to whom Beachborough was then known as a watering-place—if old Miss Gollop could revisit the glimpses of the moon, and by its light look upon the Esplanade, it would, I am certain, be impossible for that worthy old lady to recognise it as Mussared's Meadow, where she picked cowslips and sucked sorrel when she was a girl, and which was utterly untainted by the merest suspicion of brick and mortar when she died twenty years ago. She would not recognise it any more than in The Dingo Arms—that great white-faced establishment, with its suites of apartments, its coffee-room, wine-office, private bar, and great range of stabling, patronised by, and in its *sanctum sanctorum* bearing an heraldic emblazonment of the arms of, Sir Hercules Dingo Dingo, Bart., bloody hand, four-quartered shield and all—she would have recognised The Hoy, a tiny "public" where they used to sell the hardest beer and the most stomach-ache-provoking cider, and which in her day was the best tavern in the village. The white-faced terrace has sprung up in Mussared's Meadow; the Esplanade in front of it is a sea-wall and a delightful promenade for the Misses Gimp's young ladies, who are the admiration of Dingo Terrace, and who have deadly rivals in Madame de Flahault's *demoiselles*, whose piano-playing is at once the delight and the curse of Powler Square; the cliffs, once so gaunt and barren and forlorn, are dotted over with cottages and villakins, all green porch and plate-glass windows; the old barn-like church has had a fresh tower put on to him, and a fresh minister—one with his ecclesiastical millinery of the newest cut, and up to the latest thing in genuflexions—put into him; there is a Roman Catholic chapel close to the old Wesleyan meeting-house; and they have modernised and spoiled the picturesque tower where Captain Derinzy wore away a portion of his days. Great improvements, no doubt. Pavement and gas, and two policemen, and a railway, and a ritualistic incumbent, and shops with plate-glass windows, where you can get Holloway's pills and Horniman's teas, and all the things without which no

gentleman's table is complete. But the events of my story happened ten years ago, when the inhabitants of Beachborough —shopkeepers, fisher-people, villagers, and lace-makers—were like one family, and loved and hated and reviled and back-bit each other as the members of one family only can.

We shall get a little insight into the village politics if we drop in for a few minutes at Mrs. Powler's long one-storied, thatched-roof cottage, standing by itself in the middle of the little High Street. Mrs. Powler is a rich and childless old widow, Powler deceased having done a little in the vending of home-manufactured lace, and a great deal in the importing, duty-free, of French lace and brandy. It was Powler's run when Bill Gollop, the black sheep of the Gollop family, was shot by the revenue-officer down by Wastewater Hole, a matter which Powler is scarcely thought to have compromised by giving a new organ to Bedminster church. However, he has been dead some years, and his widow is very rich and tolerably hospitable; and her little thatched cottage—she never lived in any other house—is the centre and focus of Beachborough gossip.

It is just about Mrs. Powler's supper-time, which is very early in the summer, and she has guests to supper. There is no linen in all Beachborough so white as Mrs. Powler's, no such real silver plate, no such good china or glass. The Beachborough glass generally consists of fat thick goblets on one stump-leg, or dumpy heavy wineglasses with a pattern known as "the pretty" halfway up their middle, which, like the decanters, are heavy and squat, and require a strong wrist to lift them. But Mrs. Powler had thin, blown, delicate glasses, and elegant goblets with curling snakes for their handles, and drinking-cups in amber and green colours, all of which were understood to have come from "abroad," and were prized by her and respected by her neighbours accordingly. There never was a bad lobster known in Beachborough; and it is probable that Mrs. Powler's were no better than her neighbours', but she certainly had a wondrous knack of showing them off to the best advantage, setting-off the milk-white of the inside and the deep-red of the shell with layers of crisp curling parsley, as a modern

belle sets off her complexion with artfully-arranged bits of tulle and blonde. Nor was her boiled beef to be matched within ten miles round. "I du 'low that other passons' biled beef to Mrs. Powler's is sallt as brine and soft as butter," Mrs. Jupp would confess; and Mrs. Jupp was a notable housewife, and what the vulgar call "nuts" on her own cooking. There is a splendid proof of it on the table now, cold and firm and solid. Mr. Jupp has just helped himself to a slice, and it is his muttered praise that has called forth the tribute of general admiration from his better-half. Mr. Hallibut, the fish-factor and lace-dealer from Bedminster, is still occupied with the lobster; for he has a ten-mile drive home before him, and any fear of indigestion he laughs to scorn, knowing how he can "settle" that demon with two or three raw "nips" and one or two steaming tumblers of some of that famous brandy which the deceased Powler imported duty-free from abroad, and a bottle of which is always to be found for special friends in the old oak *armoire*, which stands under the Lord's-Prayer sampler which Mrs. Powler worked when she was a little girl.

Mrs. Powler is in the place of honour opposite the window. A little woman, with a dark-skinned deeply-lined face, and small sparkling black eyes, the fire in which remains undimmed by the seventy years through which they have looked upon the world, though their sight is somewhat failing. She wears a fierce black front, and a closely-fitting white lace cap over it, and an open raspberry-tart-like miniature of her deceased lord—a rather black and steelly-looking daguerreotype—gleams on her chest. Mrs. Powler likes her drinks, as she does not scruple to confess, and has been sipping from a small silver tankard of cider.

"Who was that just went passt the windor, Jupp?" she said, after a short period of tankard abstraction. "My eyes isn't what they was, and I du 'low I couldn't see, though I'm settin' right oppo-site like."

"Heart alive!" struck in Mrs. Jupp, after a moment's silence, and seeing it was perfectly impossible her better-half could sufficiently masticate the piece of cold beef on which he was engaged in anything like time for a reply—"heart alive! to hear you talk of your eyes, Mrs. Powler! Why, there's many a young gal

would give anythin' for such a pair in her head, either for show or for use, either !"

"I should think so," said Mr. Jupp, who had by this time cleared his mouth and moistened his palate with the contents of the cider-tankard—"I should think so !" and Mr. Jupp, who was of a convivial turn, began to troll, "Eyes black—as sloes, and—bo-o-oo-som rounded——"

"Mr. Jupp," interrupted Mrs. Jupp, a tall, thin, horse-faced woman, with projecting buck-teeth, and three little sausage curls of iron-gray hair flattened down on either side her forehead, "reck'lect where you are, if you please, and keep your ditties to yourself."

"Well, niver mind my eyes," said Mrs. Powler ; she desired to make peace, but she was a rich woman and in her own house, and consequently spoke in a dictatorial way—"niver mind my eyes, nor anything else for the matter of that, but tell who it was that went passt."

"It was the Captain, my dear madam, the Captain," replied Mr. Jupp, freshly attacking the cold beef, and consoling himself for his snubbing with his supper. "You had no great loss in not seeing him, ma'am : it was only the Captain."

"What ! Prinsy, Drinsy, what's his name ?" said Mr. Hallibut, taking a clean plate, and delicately clearing his lips and fingers from lobster remains on the corner of the tablecloth. "I'll trouble you, Jupp !—Is he still here ?"

"His name's Derinzy, Mr. Hollybut," said Mrs. Jupp—De-rin-zy ; it's a French name." Mrs. Jupp had been a lady's-maid once on a time, and prided herself on her manners and education.

"And mine's Hallibut, and not Hollybut, Mrs. Jupp," said the fish-factor jocosely ; "and I'll trouble J-u double p—which I take it is an English name—for some of the inside fat—next the marrer-bone there !"

"Dear heart !" interrupted Mrs. Powler, feeling her position as hostess and richest of the company was being made scarcely sufficient of ; "how you do jangle, all of you ! Not but what," added the old lady, with singular inconsequence—"not but what I'm no scholard, and don't see the use of French names, while English is good enough for me."

"Ah, but some things is better French, as you and I, and one or two more of us could tell," said jocose Mr. Hallibut, feeling it was time for a "nip," and availing himself of the turn in the conversation to point with his elbow to the cellaret, where the special brandy was kept.

"Well, help yourself, and put the bottle on the table," said the old lady, somewhat mollified. "Ah, that was among the spoils of the brave, in the good old times when men was men!" she added, in a half-melancholy tone. She was accustomed to think and speak of her deceased husband as though he had been the boldest of buccaneers, the Captain Kyd of the Dorsetshire coast; whereas he, in his lifetime, was a worthy man in a Welsh wig, who never went to sea, or was present at the "running" of a keg.

"And so the Captain's still here," pursued Hallibut; "living in the same house, and doing much the same as usual, I suppose?"

"Jist exactly the same," replied Mr. Jupp. "Wandering about the village, mollonchelly-like, and cussin' all creation."

"Mr. Jupp," broke in his better-half, "reck'lect where you are, *if* you please, and keep your profane swearin' to yourself."

"I wonder he don't go away," suggested Hallibut.

"He can't," said Mrs. Jupp solemnly.

"What! do you mean to say he's been running in debt here in Beachborough, or over in Bedminster?"

"He don't owe a brass farthing in either place," asserted Mrs. Powler; "if anybody ought to know, I ought;" and to do her justice she ought, for no one heard scandal sooner, or disseminated it more readily.

"Perhaps he hadn't the chance," said Mr. Jupp, stretching out his hand towards the tumbler.

"Mr. Jupp," said his wife, "what cause have you to say that? Was you ever kept waiting for the money for the meal or malt account? Is the rent paid regular for the bit of pasture-land for Miss Annette's cow? Well, then, reck'lect where you are, if you please, and who you're speaking of."

"Well, but if he hates the place and cusses—I mean, does

what Jupp said he did just now—what does he stop here for? Why don't he go away? He must have some reason."

"Of course he has, Mr. Hallibut," said Mrs. Jupp, with an air of dignity.

"Got the name all right this time, Mrs. Jupp; here's your health," said the jolly man, sipping his tumbler. "Well, what's the reason?"

"It's because of Miss Annette—she that we was speaking of just now."

"Oh, ah!" said Mr. Hallibut; "she's his daughter, isn't she?"

"Niece," said Mrs. Jupp.

"Oh!" said Mr. Hallibut doubtfully.

"You and I have seen the world, Hallibut," broke in Mr. Jupp, who had been paying his attentions to the French brandy. "We've heard of nieces before—priests' nieces and such-like, who——"

"Mr. Jupp, *will* you reck'lect where you are, *if* you please?—what I was goin' to say when thus interrupted, Mr. Hallibut, "was, that it's on account of his niece Miss Annette that Captain Derinzy remains in this place. She's a dreadful inval-lid, is Miss Annette, and this Dorsetsheer air suits her better than any other part of England. As to her not bein' his niece——"

"La, la, du be quiet, Harriet!" interrupted Mrs. Powler, who saw that unless she asserted herself with a dash she would be quite forgotten; "this everlastin' click-clackin', I du 'low it goes threw my head like a hot knife threw a pat of fresh butter. Av' course Miss Netty's the Captain's niece; Oh, I don't mind you men—special you, Jupp, sittin' grinnin' there like the mischief! I've lived long in the world, and in different sort of society from this; and I know what you mean fast enough, and I'm not one to pretend I don't, or to be squeamish about it."

This was a hard hit at Mrs. Jupp, who took it accordingly, and said:

"Well, but, Mrs. Powler, if Jupp were not brought up sudden, as it were——"

"Like enough, my dear, like enough; but when you're as old as I am, you'll find it's very hard to have to give up chat for fear of these kind of things, unless indeed there's young girls present, and then—well, of course!" said Mrs. Powler, with a sigh. "But, Lord, you're all wrong about why Captain Derinzy stops at Beachborough."

"Do you know why it is, Mrs. Powler?" asked Mr. Hallibut, feigning intense interest, under cover of which he mixed himself a second tumbler of brandy-and-water.

"Well, I think I do," said the old lady.

"Tell us, by all means," said the fish-factor, looking at his hostess very hard, and dropping two lumps of sugar into his tumbler.

"Well, Harriet's right so far—there's no doubt about Miss Annette being the Captain's niece; at least, there's no question of her being his daughter, as you two owdacious men—and, Jupp, you ought to know better, having been churchwarden, and your name in gold letters in front of the organ-loft, on account of the church being warmed by the hot pipes, which only made a steam and a smell, and no heat at all—as you two owdacious men hinted at. Lor' bless you, you don't know Mrs. Derinzy."

"That's what I tell 'em, Mrs. Powler," chorused Mrs. Jupp; "they don't know the Captain's wife. Why, she's as proud as proud; and he daren't say his soul's his own, let alone introducin' anyone into the house that she didn't know all about, or wish to have there."

"But still you don't know what makes them stay here," said Mrs. Powler, not at all influenced by her friend's partisanship, and determined to press her point home upon her audience.

"Well, if it isn't Miss Netty's illness, I don't," said Mrs. Jupp slowly, and with manifest reluctance at having to acknowledge herself beaten.

"Then I'll tell you," said the old lady triumphantly, smoothing her dress, looking slowly round, and pausing before she spoke. "You know Mrs. Stothard?"

"Miss Annette's servant—yes," said Mrs. Jupp.

"Servant—pouf!" said Mrs. Powler, snapping her fingers,

and thereby awaking Mr. Jupp, who had just dropped asleep, and was dreaming that he was in his mill, and dared not stretch out his legs for fear of getting them entangled in the machinery. "Who ever saw her do any servant's work; did you?"

"N-no; I can't say I ever did," replied Mrs. Jupp; "but then, I have never been to the house."

"What does that matter?" asked the old lady, rather illogically; "no one ever did. No one ever saw her do a stroke of servant's work in the house: mend clothes, wash linen, darn stockings, make beds. Dear heart alive! she's no servant."

"What is she then?" asked Mrs. Jupp eagerly.

"A poor relation!" hissed Mrs. Powler, bending over the table; "a poor relation, my dear, of either his or hers, with something about her that prevents them shaking her off, and obliges them to keep her quiet."

"Do you think so—*really* think so?"

"I'm sure of it, my dear—certain sure."

"Lord, I remember," said Mrs. Jupp, with a sudden affectation of a mincing manner, and a lofty carriage of her head; "I remember once seeing something of the sort at the playhouse: but then the poor relation was a man, a man who always went about in a large cloak, and appeared in places where he was least expected and most unwelcome. It was in Covent Garden Theatre."

"Covent Garden Theatre," said Jupp, suddenly waking up. "I remember, in the saloon——"

"Mr. Jupp, reck'lect where you are, *if* you please, and spare the company your reminiscences."

Here Mr. Hallibut, who, finding himself bored by the conversation about people of whom he knew nothing, had quietly betaken himself to drink, and had got through three tumblers of brandy-and-water unobserved, remarked that, as he had a long drive before him, he thought it was time for him to go; and, after making his adieux, departed to find the ostler at The Hoy, who had his rough old pony in charge. Mrs. Jupp put on her bonnet, and after a word of promise to look in next morning and hear the remainder of her hostess's suspicions about Mrs. Stothard, roused up Mr. Jupp, who, balancing him-

self on frail and trembling legs, which he still believed to be endangered by the proximity of his mill's machinery, staggered out into the open air, where he was bid to reck'lect himself *if* he pleased, and to walk steadily, so that the coastguard then passing might not see he was drunk.

CHAPTER II.

A VISITOR EXPECTED.

IT was indeed Captain Derinzy who had passed up the village street. It is needless to say that he had not heard anything of the comments which his appearance had evoked; but had he heard them, they would not have made the smallest difference to him. He was essentially a man of the world, and on persons of his class these things have very little effect. A is irretrievably involved; B has outwritten himself; C is much too intimate with Mrs. D; while D is ruining that wretched young E at *écarté*—so at least say Y and Z; but the earlier letters of the alphabet do not care much about it. They know that the world must be always full of shaves and *cancans*, and, like men versed in the great art of living, they know they must have their share of them, and know how to take them. Captain Derinzy passed up the village street without bestowing one single thought upon that street's inhabitants, or indeed upon anything or anybody within a hundred miles of Beachborough. He looked utterly incongruous to the place, and he felt utterly incongruous to it, and if he were recalled to the fact of its existence, or of his existence in it, by his accidentally slipping over one of the round knobbly stones which supplied the place of a footway, or having to step across one of the wide self-made sluices which, coming from the cottages, discharged themselves into the common kennel, all he did was to wish it heartily at the devil; an aspiration

which he uttered in good round rich tones, and without any heed to the feelings of such lookers-on as might be present.

See him now, as he steps off the knobbly pavement and strikes across the road, making for the greensward of the cliff, and unconsciously becoming bathed in a halo of sunset glory in his progress. A thin man, of fifty years of age, of middle height, with a neat trim figure, and one of his legs rather lame, with a spare, sallow, fleshless face, high cheek-boned, lantern-jawed, bright black eyes, straight nose, thin lips, not over-shadowed, but outlined rather, by a very small crisp black moustache. His hair is blue-black in tint and wiry in substance, so much at least of it as can be seen under a rather heavy brown sombrero hat, which he wears perched on one side of his head in rather a jaunty manner. His dress, a suit of some light-gray material, is well cut, and perfectly adapted for the man and the place ; and his boots are excellently made, and fit his small natty feet to perfection. His ungloved hands are lithe and brown ; in one of them he carries a crook-headed cane, with which—a noticeable peculiarity—he fences and makes passes at such posts and palings as he encounters on his way. That he was a gentleman born and bred you could have little doubt ; little doubt from his carriage of himself, and an indescribable, unmistakable something, that he was, or had been, a military man ; no doubt at all that he was entirely out of place in Beachborough, and that he was bored out of his existence.

Captain Derinzy passed the little road, which was ankle-deep in white sandy dust, save where the overflowings of the kennel had worked it into thick flaky mud, hopped nimbly, albeit lamely, over the objectionable parts, and when he reached the other side, and stood upon the short crisp turf leading up to the cliff, looked at the soles of his boots, shook his head, and swore aloud. Considerably relieved by this proceeding, he made his way slowly and gently up the ascent, pausing here and there, less from want of breath than from sheer absolute boredom. Rambling quietly on in his own easy-going fashion, now fencing at a handrail, now making a one, two, three sword-exercise cut, and finally demolishing a sprouting field-flower, he

took some time to reach the top of the cliff. When there he looked carefully about him for a clean dry spot, and, having found one, dropped gently down at full length, and comfortably reclining his head on his arm, looked round him.

It was high-tide below, and the calmest and softest of silver summer seas was breaking in the gentlest ripple on the beach, and against the base of the high chalk cliff whereon he lay. The entrance to the little bay was marked by a light line of foam-crested breakers, beyond which lay a broad stretch of heaving ocean; but the bay itself was "oily calm," its breast dotted here and there with fishing-luggers outward-bound for the night's service, their big tan sails gleaming lightly and picturesquely in the red beams of the setting sun. Faintly, very faintly, from below rose the cries of the boatmen—hoarse monotonous calls, which had accompanied such and such acts of labour for centuries, and had been taught by sire to son, and practised from time immemorial. But the silence around the man outstretched on the cliff's top was unbroken save by the occasional cry of the seafowl, wheeling round and round above his head, and swooping down into their habitation holes, with which the chalk-face was honeycombed. As he lay there idly watching, the sun, a great blood-red globe of fire, sank into the sea, leaving behind it a halo of light, in which the strips of puff-cloud hovering over the horizon—here light, thin, and vaporous, there heavy, dense, and opaque—assumed eccentric outlines, and deadened to one gorgeous depth of purple. There were very few men who would have been insensible to the loveliness of the surroundings—very few but would have been impressed under such circumstances with a sense of the beauty of Nature and the beneficence of Providence. Captain Derinzy was one of these few. He saw it all, marked it all, looked at it leisurely and critically through half-shut eyes, as though scanning some clever picture or some scene at the theatre. Then, quietly dropping his head back upon his hand, he gave a prolonged yawn, and said quietly to himself, "Oh, dam!"

"Oh, dam!" Sun and sea and sky, purple clouds, foam-crested breakwaters, tan sails sunset-gilded, yohoing boatmen, nest-seeking curlews, hoary cliff. "Oh, dam!" But that was

not all. Lazily lying at full length, lazily picking blades of grass, lazily nibbling them, and lazily spitting them from his mouth, he said in a quaintly querulous tone :

"Beastly place! How I hate it! Beastly sea, and all that kind of thing; and those fellows going away in their beastly boats, smelling of fish and oil and grease, and beastliness, and wearing greasy woollen nightcaps, and smoking beastly strong tobacco in their foul pipes; and then people draw them, and write about them, and call them romantic, and all such cussed twaddle! Why the deuce ain't they clean and neat, and why don't they dance about, and sing like those fellows in *Masaniello*? And—Oh Lord! *Masaniello*! I didn't think I should even have remembered the name of anything decent in this infernal place! What's the time now?" looking at his watch. "Nearly eight. Gad! fancy having had a little dinner at the Windham, or, better still, at the Coventry, where they say that fellow—what's his name?—Francatelli, is so good, and then dropping down to the Opera to hear Cruvelli and Lablache, or the new house which Poyntz wrote me about—Covent Garden—where Grisi and Mario and the lot have gone! Fancy my never having seen the new house! Dammy! I shall become a regular fogey if I stop in this infernal hole much longer. And not as if I were stopping for myself either! If I'd been shaking a loose leg, and had outrun the constable, or anything of that sort, I can understand a fellow being compelled to pull up and live quiet for a bit; though there's Boulogne, which is much handier to town, and much jollier with the *établissement*, and plenty of *écarté*, and all that sort of thing, to go on with. But *this*! Pooh! that's the dam folly of a man's marrying what they call a superior woman! I suppose Gertrude's all right; I suppose it will come off all straight; but I don't see the particular pull for me when it does come off. Here am I wastin' the best years of my life—and just at a time when I haven't got too many of 'em to waste, by Jove!—just that another fellow may stand in for a good thing. To be sure, he's my son, and there's fatherly feelings, and all that sort of thing; but he's never done anything for me, and I think it's rather hard he don't come and take a little of this infernal dreariness

on his own shoulders. I shall have to cut away—I know I shall; I can't stand it much longer. I shall have to tell Gertrude—and I never can do that, and I haven't got the pluck to cut away without telling her, and I know she won't even let me go to old Dingo's for the shooting in the autumn. What an ass I was ever to let myself be swindled into coming into this beastly place! and how confoundedly I hate it! Oh, dam! Oh, dam!"

As he concluded he raised himself lightly to his feet, and commenced his descent of the hill as easily and jauntily as he had ascended it. His lame leg troubled him a little, and once when he trod on a rolling stone and nearly fell, he stopped and smiled pleasantly at the erring foot, and shook his cane facetiously over it. As he entered the village, he muttered to himself: "Good heavens! *du monde*, how very interesting!" For the hours of toil were over, and the shopkeepers and the wives of the fishermen, and such of the fisher-boys as had not gone to sea that evening, were standing at their doors and gossiping, or playing in the street. The lace-making girls were there too—very pretty girls for the most part, with big black eyes and swarthy complexions and thick blue-black hair; their birthright these advantages, for in the old days one of the home-flying ships of the Spanish Armada had been wrecked on the Beachborough coast, and the saved mariners had intermarried with the village women, and transmitted their swarthy comeliness to their posterity. As the Captain passed by, hats were lifted and curtsies dropped, courtesy which he duly returned by touching his sombrero with his forefinger in the military style to the men, and by God-blessing the women and chin-chucking the girls with great heartiness.

So on till he arrived at his own house, where he opened the door from the outside, and entering the handsome old dining-room, was surprised to see the table laid for four persons.

"Hallo! what's this?" he said to a woman at the other end of the room with her back towards him. "Who is coming to dinner, Mrs. Stothard?"

"Have you forgotten?" said the woman addressed, without turning her head. "Dr. Wainwright."

"Oh, ah!" growled Captain Derinzy, in a subdued key. "Where's Annette?"

"In her own room."

"Why don't she come down?"

"Because she's heard Dr. Wainwright is expected, and has turned sulky, and won't move."

"Oh, dam!" said Captain Derinzy

CHAPTER III.

DURING OFFICE-HOURS.

THE "Office of H.M. Stannaries" is in a small back street in the neighbourhood of Whitehall. What H.M. Stannaries were was known to but very few of the initiated, and to no "externs" at all. Old Mr. Bult, who, from time immemorial had been the chief-clerk of the office, would, on being interrogated as to the meaning of the word or the duties of his position, take a large pinch of snuff, blow the scattered grains off his beautifully got-up shirt-frill, stare his querist straight in the face, and tell him that "there were certain matters of a departmental character, concerning which it was not considered advisable to involve oneself in communication with the public at large." The younger men were equally reticent. To those who tried to pump them, they replied that they "wrote things, you know; letters, and those kind of things," and "kept accounts." What of? Why, of the Stannaries, of course. But what were the Stannaries? Ah, that was going into a matter of detail which they did not feel themselves justified in explaining. Their ribald friends used to say that the men in the Stannaries Office could not tell you what they had to do, because they did nothing at all, or that they did so little that they were sworn to secrecy on receiving their appointments, lest any inquisitive Radical

member, burning to distinguish himself before his constituents in the cause of Civil Service reform—a bray with which the dullest donkey can make himself heard—should rise in the House, and demand an inquiry, or a Parliamentary Commission, or some of those other dreadful inquisitions so loathsome to the official mind.

However, no matter what work was or was not done there, the Stannaries Office was a fact, and a fact for which the nation paid, and according to the entries in the Civil Service estimates, paid pretty handsomely. For there was a Lord Commissioner of Stannaries, at two thousand a-year, and a secretary at one thousand, and a private secretary at three hundred, and four-and-twenty clerks at salaries ranging from one to eight hundred, besides messengers and office-keepers. It was a well-thought-of office to; the men engaged in it went into good society, and were recognised as brother officials by the lofty bureaucrats of the Treasury and the Foreign Office—great creatures, who looked upon Somerset House and the Post Office as tenanted by the sons of peers' butlers, and who regarded the Custom House as a damp place somewhere on the Thames, where amphibious persons known as "tide-waiters" searched passengers' baggage. But it was by no means *infra dig.* to know men in the Stannaries; and that department of the public service annually contributed a by no means small share of the best dancers and amateur performers of the day. "Only give us gentlemen," Mr. Branwhite, the secretary, would say in his first official interview with a newly-appointed Lord Commissioner—for the patronage of his office was vested in the Lord Commissioner of the Stannaries, who was a political functionary, and came in and went out with the Government—"only give us gentlemen; that's all I ask. We don't require much brains in this place, and that's the truth; but we do want birth and breeding." And on these points Mr. Branwhite, who was the son of an auctioneer at Penrith, and who combined the grace of Dr. Johnson with the geniality of Dr. Abernethy, was inexorable. The cry was echoed everywhere throughout the office. "Let's have gentlemen, for God's sake!" little Fitzbinkie, the private secretary, would say, adding, with a look of as much horror as he could

throw into his eyeglass—you never saw his eyes—"there was a fellow here the other day, came to see my lord. Worthington—you've heard about him—wonderful fellow at the Admiralty, great gun at figures, and organisation, and that kind of thing; reformed the navy almost, and so on; and—give you my honour—he had on a brown shooting-jacket, and a black-silk waistcoat, give you my word! Frightful, eh? Let's have gentlemen, at any price."

And the prayer of these great creatures was, to a large extent, answered. Most of the men in the Stannaries Office were pleasant, agreeable, sufficiently educated, well-dressed, and gentlemanly-mannered. Within the previous few years there had been a Scotch and an Irish Lord Commissioner, and each of them had left traces of his patronage in the office: the first in the importation of two or three grave men, who, not finding work enough to do, filled up their leisure by reading statistics, or working out mathematical problems; the last, by the appointment of half-a-dozen roistering blades, who did very little of the work there was to do, and required the help of a Maunders' "Treasury of Knowledge," subscribed for amongst them, to enable them to do what they did; but who were such good riders and such first-rate convivialists that they were found in mounts and supper-parties for two-thirds of the year. The Irish element was, however, decidedly unpopular with Mr. Branwhite, the secretary, a cold-blooded, fish-like man, dry and tasteless, like a human captain's biscuit, who had no animal spirits himself, and consequently hated them in others. He was a long, thin, melancholy-looking fiddle-faced sort of a man, who tried to hide his want of manner under an assumed *brusquerie* and bluntness of speech. He had been originally brought up as a barrister, and owed his present appointment to the fact of his having a very pretty wife, who attracted the senile attentions and won the flagging heart of the Earl of Lechmere, who happened to be Lord Commissioner of the Stannaries when Sir Francis Pongo died, after forty years' tenure of the secretaryship. Lord Lechmere having, when he called at Mrs. Branwhite's pretty villa in the Old Brompton lanes, been frequently embarrassed by the presence of Mr.

Branwhite, that gentleman's barristerial practice being not sufficient to take him often to the single chamber which he rented in Quality Court, Chancery Lane, thought this a favourable opportunity to improve the Branwhite finances, in this instance at least without cost to himself, and of assuring himself of Mr. Branwhite's necessitated absence from the Old Brompton villa during certain periods of the day. Hence Mr. Branwhite's appointment as secretary to H.M. Stannaries. There was a row about it, of course. Why did not the promotion "go in the office"? That is what the Stannaries men wanted to know, and what they threatened to get several members of Parliament to inquire of the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, who replied on Stannaries matters in the Lower House. *The Official Chronicle*, that erudite and uncompromising advocate of the Government service, came out with a series of letters signed "Eraser," "Half-margin," and "Nunquam Dormio;" and a leader in which Lord Lechmere was compared to King David, and Mr. Branwhite to Uriah the Hittite, the parallel in the latter case being heightened by the writer's suggestion that each had been selected "for a very warm berth." But the authorities cared neither for official remonstrances nor press sarcasms. They had their answer to the question why the promotion did not go in the office. Who was the next in rotation? Mr. Bult, the chief-clerk. Was Mr. Bult competent in any way for the secretaryship? Would the gentlemen of the Stannaries Office like to see their department represented by Mr. Bult? Certainly not. Very well, then, as it was impossible, after Mr. Bult's lengthened service, during which his character had been stainless, to pass him by, and place any of his juniors over his head, the only course was to seek for Sir Francis's successor in some gentleman unconnected with the place. This was the way in which Mr. Branwhite obtained his appointment. Lord Lechmere's party went out of office soon after, and Lord Lechmere himself has been dead for years; but Mr. Branwhite held on through the *régimes* of the Duke of M'Tavish and Viscount Ballyscran, and was all-powerful as ever now while Lord Polhill of Pollington was Lord Commissioner. What was thought of him, and, indeed, what was

thought and said pretty plainly about most official persons and topics, we shall learn by looking into a large room on the ground-floor of the office known as the Principal Registrar's Room.

The Principal Registrar's Room must by no means be confounded with the Registry, which was a very different, and not a very choice place, where junior clerks got their hands into Stannaries work by stamping papers and covering their fingers with printers'-ink. The Principal Registrar's Room was appropriated to the Principal Registrar, and three of the best-looking assistants he could get hold of. The gentleman seated at the writing-table in the centre of the room, and reading *The Morning Post*, is the Principal Registrar, Mr. Courtney. He sits habitually with his back to the light, so that you cannot see his features very distinctly—sufficiently, however, to make out that he is an old, in reality, a very old man, made up for a young one. He must have been of fair complexion and good-looking at one time, for his capitally-made wig is red in colour, and though his perfectly-shaven cheeks are mottled and pulpy, his features are well-cut and aristocratic. His throat, exposed to view through his turn-down collar, is old and wrinkled, reminding one of a fowl's neck; and his hands are soft and seemingly boneless. So much as can be seen of his legs under the table reminds one of Punch's legs, exhibited by that "godless old rebel" in front of his show: the knees knock together, and the feet turn inwards towards each other with helpless imbecility. The only time that Mr. Courtney exhibits any great signs of vitality is in the evening at the Portland Club, where he plays an admirable game of whist, and where his hand is always heavily backed. Though he confesses to being "an old fellow," and quotes "*Me, nec fœmina nec puer*," with a deprecating shrug of the shoulders, he likes to hear the adventures of his young companions, and is by no means inconveniently strait-laced in his ideas. He has a comic horror of any "low fellows," or men who do not go into what he calls "sassiety;" he regards the Scotch division of the office as "stoopid," and contemplates the horsiness and loud tone of the Irish with great disfavour. He has, he thinks, a very good set of "boys" under him just

now, and is proportionately pleasant and good-tempered. Let us look at his "boys."

That good-looking young man at the desk in the farthest window is Paul Derinzy, only son of our friend the Captain, resident at Beachborough. The likeness to his father is seen in his thin straight-cut features, small lithe figure, and blue-black hair. The beard movement had just been instituted in Government offices, and Paul Derinzy follows it so far as to have grown a thick black moustache and a small pointed beard, both very becoming to his sallow complexion and Velasquez type of face. He is about five-and-twenty years of age, and has an air of birth and breeding which finds him peculiar favour in his Chief's eyes.

In his drooping eyelids, in his *pose*, in his outstretched arms, and head lying lazily on one side, there was an expression of languor that argued but ill for the amount of work to be gotten out him in any way, and which proclaimed Mr. Paul Derinzy to be one of that popular regiment, "The Queen's Hard Bargains." But what of that? He certainly did his office credit by his appearance; there was very seldom much work to be done, and when there was, Paul was so popular that no one would refuse to undertake his share. That man opposite, for instance, loved Paul as his brother, and would have done anything for him.

The man opposite is George Wainwright. He is four or five years older than Paul, and of considerably longer standing in the office. In personal appearance he differs very much from his friend. George Wainwright stands six feet in height, is squarely and strongly built, has a mass of fair hair curling almost on to his shoulders, and wears a soft, thick, fair beard. His hands are very large and very white, with big blue veins standing out on them, and his broad wrists show immense power. His eyes are large and prominent, hazel in colour, and soft in expression; he has a rather long and thick nose, and a large mouth, with fresh white teeth showing when he smiles. He is smiling now, at some remark made by the third assistant to the Principal Registrar, Mr. Dunlop, commonly called "Billy Dunlop," a pleasant fellow, remarkable for two things, imper-

turbable good-humour, and never letting anyone know where he lived.

"What are you two fellows grinning at?" asks Paul Derinzy, lazily lifting his head and looking across at them.

"I'm grinning at Billy's last night's adventures," replies George Wainwright. "He went to the Opera, and supped at Dubourg's."

"Horrible profligate! Alone?"

"So likely!" says Billy Dunlop. "All right, though; I mean, quite correct. Only Mick O'Dwyer with me."

"Mick O'Dwyer at the Opera!" says Paul in astonishment. "Why, he always swears he has no dress-clothes."

"No more he has; but I lent him some of mine—a second suit I keep for first nights of Jullien's Concerts, and other places where it is sure to be crammed and stivy. They fitted Mick stunningly, and he looked lovely in them; but he couldn't get my boots on, and he had to go in his own. There were lots of our fellows there, and they looked astonished to see Mick clothed and in his right mind; and at the back of the pit, just by the meat-screen there, you know, we met Lannigan, the M.P. for some Irish place, who's Mick's cousin. He didn't recognise him at first; then when Mick spoke he looked him carefully all over, and said: 'You're lovely, Mick!' Then his eyes fell on the boots; he turned to me with a face of horror, and muttered: 'Ah Billy, the brogues spoil the lot!'"

The two other men laughed so loudly at this story that Mr. Courtney looked up from his newspaper, and requested to know what was the joke. When he heard it he smiled, at the same time shaking his head deprecatingly, and saying:

"For my part, I confess I cannot stand Mr. O'Dwyer. He is a perfect Goth."

"Ah Chief, that's really because you don't know him," said Wainwright. "He's really an excellent fellow; isn't he, Billy?"

"If Mick had only a little money he would be charming," said Dunlop; "but he hasn't any. He's of some use to me, however; I've had no occasion to consult the calendar since Mick's been here. He borrows half-a-crown of me every day, and five shillings on saints'-days, and——"

"Hold on a minute, Billy," said Paul Derinzy; "if you lent Mick your clothes, you must have taken him home—to where you live, I mean; so that somebody has found out your den at last. What did you do? swear Mick to secrecy?"

"Better than that, sir; I brought the clothes down here, and made Mick put 'em on in his own room. No, sir, none of you have yet struck on my trail.

Far in a wild, unknown to public view,
From youth to age Mr. William Dunlop grew."

"Haven't you boys solved that mystery yet?" asked Mr. Courtney smiling, and showing a set of teeth that did the dentist credit.

"Not yet, Chief; we very nearly had it out last week," replied Paul.

"When was that?"

"After that jolly little dinner you gave us down at Greenwich. You drove home, you know; we came up by rail. I suppose Quartermaine's champagne had worked the charm; but the lord of William's bosom certainly sat very lightly on its throne, and he was, in fact, what the wicked call 'tight.' At the London Bridge Station I hailed a hansom, and Billy got in with me, saying I could set him down. Knowing that Billy is popularly supposed to reside in a cellar in Short's Gardens, Drury Lane, I told the driver to take us a short cut to that pleasant locality. Billy fell asleep, but woke up just as we arrived in Drury Lane, looked round him, shouted: 'This will do!' stopped the cab, and jumped out. Now, I thought, I've got him! I told the cabman to drive slowly on, and I stepped out and dodged behind a lamp. But Billy was too much for me: in the early dawn I saw him looking straight at me, smiting his nose with his forefinger, and muttering defiantly: 'No, you don't!' So eventually I left him."

"Of course you did. No, no, Chief; William is not likely to fall a prey to such small deer. He will dissipate this mystery on one great occasion."

"And that will be——?"

"When he gets his promotion. When the edict is promulgated, elevating William to the senior class, he will bid you all

welcome to a most choice, elegant, and, not to put too fine a point on it, classical repast, prepared in his own home."

"Well, if we're to wait till then, you'll enjoy your classic home, or whatever you call it, for a long time unencumbered with our society," said Derinzy. "Who's to have the next vacancy—Barlow's vacancy, I mean; who's to have it, Chief?"

"My dear boy," said Mr. Courtney, with a shoulder-shrug, "you are aware that I can scarcely be considered *au mieux* with the powers that be—meaning Mrs. Branwhite—and consequently I am not likely to be taken into confidence in such matters. But I understand, I have heard, quite *par hasard*," and the old gentleman waved his double glasses daintily in the air as he pronounced the French phrase, "that Mr. Dickson is the selected—person."

"D—n Mr. Dickson!" said Paul Derinzy.

"Hear, hear!" said Mr. Dunlop; "my sentiments entirely, well and forcibly put. A job, sir, a beastly job. 'John Branwhite, Jobmaster,' ought to be written on the Secretary's door; 'neat flies' over deserving people's heads, and 'experienced drivers;' those scoundrels that he employs to spy, and sneak, and keep the fellows up to their work. No, sir, no chance for my being put up; as the party in the Psalms remarks, 'promotion cometh neither from the east nor from the west.'"

"No, Billy, from the south-west this time," said Paul Derinzy. "Dickson's people have been having Branwhite and his wife to dine in Belgrave Square; and our sweet Scratchetary was so delighted with Lady Selina, and so fascinated by the swell surroundings, that he has been grovelling ever since: hence Dickson's lift."

"I have noticed," said Mr. Courtney, standing up and looking around him with that benevolent expression which he always assumed when about to give utterance to an intensely-unpleasant remark, "I have noticed that when a—point of fact, a cad—tries to get into sassiety on which he has no claim for admission, he invariably selects the wrong people. What you just said, my dear Paul, bears out my argument entirely. This man Branwhite—worthy person, official position, and that kind of thing; no more knowledge of decent people than a

Hottentot—struggles to get into sassiety, and who does he get to introduce him? Dickson, brewer-man, malt and hops and drugs, and blue boards with 'Entire,' and that kind of thing. Worthy person in his way, and married Lady Selina Walkinshaw, sister of Lord Barclay; but as to sassiety—very third-rate, God bless my soul, very third-rate indeed!"

"Well, I don't know any swells," said Billy Dunlop, "and I don't think I want to. From what I've seen of 'em, they're scarcely so convivial as they might be. Not in the drinking line; I don't mean that—they're all there; but in the talking. And talking of talking, Mr. Wainwright, we've not had the pleasure of hearing your charming voice for the last quarter of an hour. Has it come off at last?"

"Has what come off, Billy?" asked George Wainwright.

"The amputation. Has our father the eminent, &c., at last performed the operation and cut off our tongue? and is it then in a choice vial, neatly preserved in spirits-of-wine, covered over with a bit of a kid-glove, tied down with packthread, and placed on a shelf between a stethoscope and a volume of 'Quain's Anatomy': is that it?"

"Funny dog!" said George Wainwright, looking across at him. "I often wonder why you stop here, Billy, at two-forty, rising to three-eighty by annual increments of ten, when there's such a splendid future awaiting you in the ring. That mug of yours is worth a pound a-week alone; and then those charming witticisms, so new, so fresh, so eminently humorous——"

"Will you shut up?"

"How they would fetch the threepenny gallery! Why don't I talk? I do sometimes in your absence; but when you're here, I feel like one of 'those meaner beauties of the night, which poorly satisfy our eyes;' and when you begin I ask myself: 'What are you when the moon shall rise?'"

"Shut up, will you? not merely your mouth, but your inkstand, blotting-book, and all the rest of the paraphernalia by which you wring an existence out of a too-easily-satisfied Government. You seem to have forgotten it's Saturday."

"By Jove, so it is!" said George Wainwright.

"Yes, sir," continued Mr. Dunlop; "like that party in Shake-

speare, who drew a dial from his poke, and said it was just ten, and in an hour it would be eleven, I've just looked at my watch and find that in ten minutes it will be one o'clock, at which hour, by express permission of her Majesty's Ministers, signed and sealed at a Cabinet Council, of which Mr. Arthur Helps was clerk, the gentlemen of H.M. Stannaries are permitted on Saturdays to—to cut it. That is the reason, odd as it may seem, why I like Saturday afternoon. Mr. Tennyson, I believe, knew some parties who found out a place where it was always Saturday afternoon. Mr. W. Dunlop presents his compliments to the Laureate, and would be obliged for an introduction to the said place and parties."

"And what are you going to do with yourself to-day, Billy?"

"I am going, sir, if I may so express myself without an appearance of undue vanity, where Glory waits me. But I am prepared to promise, if it will afford any gentleman the smallest amount of satisfaction, that when Fame elates me, I will at once take the opportunity of thinking of THEE!"

"And where is Glory at the present moment on the look-out for you, William?"

"Glory, sir, in the person of Mr. Kemp, the Izaak Walton of the day, will be found awaiting me in a large punt, moored on the silver bosom of the Thames, off the pleasant village of Teddington, a vessel containing, item two rods, item groundbait and worms for fishing, item a stone-jar of—water! A most virtuous and modest way of spending the afternoon, isn't it? I wish I could think it was going to be spent equally profitably by all!" and Billy Dunlop made a comic grimace in the direction of Paul Derinzy, and then assuming a face of intense gravity, took his hat off a peg, nodded, and vanished.

"Well, good-bye, my dear boys," said Mr. Courtney, coming out from behind the partition where the washing-stand was placed—it was a point of honour among the men to ignore his performance of his toilette—with his wig tightly fixed on and poodled up under his glossy hat, with his close-fitting lavender gloves, and with a flower in the button-hole of his coat; "*au revoir* on Monday. I'm going down to dear Lord Lumbsden's little place at Marlow to blow this confounded dust out of me,

and to get a little ozone into me, to keep me up till I get away to Scotland. *Au revoir!*" and the old boy kissed his finger-tips, and shambled away.

"What are you going to do this afternoon, old man?" asked George Wainwright, pulling off his coat preparatory to a wash, of Paul Derinzy, who had been sitting silent for the last ten minutes, now nervously plucking at his moustache, now referring to his watch, and evidently in a highly nervous state.

"I don't know exactly, George," Paul replied, without looking up at his friend. "I haven't quite made up my mind."

"Going to play tennis?"

"No, I think not."

"Going down to the Oval, to have an hour or two with the professionals? Good day to-day, and the ground's in clipping order."

"No, I think not."

"Well, then, look here. Come along with me: we'll go for a spin as far as Hendon; come back and dine at Jack Straw's Castle at Hampstead, where the man has some wonderfully-good dry sherry, which he bought the other day at a sale up there; and then walk quietly in at night. What do you say?"

"No, I think not to-day, old fellow."

"Oh, all right," said George Wainwright, after an instant's pause; "I'm sorry I spoke."

"Don't be angry, George, old boy! You know I'm never so jolly as when I'm with you, and that there's no man on earth I care for like you," said Paul, earnestly; but I've half-promised myself for this afternoon, and until I hear—and I expect to hear every moment—I don't know whether I'm free or not."

"All right, Paul. I daresay I bore you sometimes, old man. I often think I do. But, you know, I'm five or six years older than you, and I was the first fellow you knew when you came into the service, through your people being acquainted with mine, and so I've a natural interest in you. Besides, you're a young swell in your way, and it does good to me to hear you talk and mark your freshness, and your—well, your youth. After thirty, a London man hasn't much of either."

"At it again, are you, George? Why don't you keep a

property tub on the premises? You can't do your old Diogenes business effectively without it. Or do you want no tub so long as you have me for your butt? Sold you there, I think. You intended to say that yourself."

"Mr. Derinzy," said George Wainwright gravely, "you must indeed have lost every particle of respect for me when you could imagine that I would have descended to a low verbal jest of that nature. Well, since you won't come, I'll——"

"I never said I wouldn't yet, though I can't expect you to wait any longer for my decision. I——"

At that moment a messenger entered the room with a letter in his hand.

"For you, sir," he said to Mr. Derinzy; "the boy wouldn't wait to know if there was an answer."

"All right!" said Paul, opening it hurriedly, with a flushed face.

It had an outer and an inner envelope, both sealed.

"And I may be like the boy, I suppose," said George Wainwright, eyeing his friend with a curiously mixed expression of interest and pity; "I needn't wait to know if there's an answer."

"No, dear old George; I can't come with you this afternoon," replied Paul; and then he looked at the letter again.

It was very short; only one line:

"At the usual place, at three to-day.—DAISY."

CHAPTER IV.

AFTER OFFICE-HOURS.

PAUL DERINZY was left alone in the Principal Registrar's Room, and silence reigned in H.M. Stannaries Office. Snow does not melt away more speedily under the influence of the bright spring sun than do the clerks of that admirable depart-

ment under the sound of one o'clock on a Saturday afternoon. Within ten minutes the place was deserted, the gentlemen had all cleared out, the messengers had closed up desks and lockers, despatched papers, and bolted, and the place was left to Mr. Derinzy and the office-keeper. The latter went to the door with the last departing messenger, looked up the street and down the street, and with something of the soreness of a man who knew he was imprisoned for at least thirty-six hours, said he thought they were going to have some rain; an idea which the messenger—who had an engagement to take the young lady with whom he was keeping company to Gravesend on the Sunday—indignantly pooh-poohed. Not to be put down by this sort of thing, the office-keeper declared that rain was wanted by the country, to which the messenger replied that he thought of himself more than the country; and as the country had done without it for three weeks, it might hold over without much bother till Monday, he should think; and nodded, and went his way. The office-messenger kicked the door viciously to, and proceeded to make his round of the various rooms to see that everything was in order, and to turn the key in each door after his inspection. When he came to the Principal Registrar's Room he went in as usual, but finding Mr. Derinzy there performing on his head with two hairbrushes, he begged pardon and retreated, wondering what the deuce possessed anyone to stop in the Office of H.M. Stannaries when he had the chance of leaving it and going anywhere else. A cynical fellow this office-keeper, only to be humanised by his release on Monday morning.

Mr. Paul Derinzy was in no special hurry, he had plenty of time before him, and he had his toilette to attend to; a business which, though he was no set dandy, he never scamped. He was very particular about the exact parting of his hair, the polish of his nails, and the set of his necktie; and between each act of dressing he went back to his writing-table, and re-read the little note lying upon it. Once or twice he took the little note up, and whispered "darling!" to it, and kissed it before he put it down again. Poor Paul! he was evidently very hard hit, and just at the time of life, too, when these wounds

fester and rankle so confoundedly. Your *ci-devant jeune homme*, your middle-aged gallant, *viveur*, *coureur des dames*, takes a love-affair as easily as his dinner: if it goes well, all right; if it comes to grief, equally all right; the sooner it is over the better he likes it. The great cynical philosopher of the age, whose cynicism it is now the fashion to deny—as though he could help it, or would have been in the least ashamed of it—in one of his ballads calls upon all his coevals of forty to declare:

> Did not the fairest of the fair
> Common grow, and wearisome, ere
> Ever a month had passed away?

Middle-aged man has other aims, other resources, other objects. The "court, camp, grove, the vessel and the mart," fame, business, ambition—all of these have claims upon his time, claims which he is compelled to recognise in their proper season; and, worst of all, he has recovered from the attacks of the "cruel madness of love," a youthful disorder, seldom or never taken in middle life; the glamour which steeped all surrounding objects in roseate hues no longer exists, and it is impossible to get up any spurious imitations of it. Time has taught him common sense; he has made friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; and instead of wandering about the grounds begging Maud to come out to him, and singing rapturous nonsense to the flowers, he is indoors dining with the Tory squires. But the young have but one idea in the world. They are entirely of opinion, with Mr. Coleridge's hero, that all thoughts, "all passions, all delights that stir this mortal frame," are "ministers of love," and "feed his sacred flame." Perpetually to play at that sweet game of lips, to alternate between the heights of hope and the depths of despair, to pine for a glance and to be made happy by a word, to have no care for anything else, to ignore the friends in whose society you have hitherto found such delight, to shut your eyes knowingly, wilfully, and resolutely to the sight of everything but one object, and to fall down and persistently adore that object in the face of censure, contempt, and obloquy, is granted to but few men over thirty years of age. Let them not be ashamed of the

weakness, rather let them congratulate themselves on its possession: it will give a zest and flavour to their middle life which but few enjoy.

Paul Derinzy, however, was just at that period of his life when everything is rose-coloured. He was even young enough to enjoy looking at himself in the glass, which is indeed a proof of youth; for there is no face or no company a man so soon gets sick of as his own. But Paul stood before the little glass behind the washing-screen settling his hat, and gazing at himself very complacently, even going so far as to fetch another little glass from his drawer, and by aid of the two ascertaining that his back parting was perfectly straight. As he replaced the glass, he took out a yellow rosebud, carefully wrapped in wool, cleared it from its envelope, and sticking it in his button-hole, took his departure.

Paul looked up at the Horse-Guards clock as he passed by, and finding that he had plenty of time to spare, walked slowly up Whitehall. The muslin-cravated, fresh-coloured, country gentlemen at the Union Club, and the dyed and grizzled veterans at the Senior United, looked out of the window at the young man as he passed, and envied him his youth and his health and his good looks. He strolled up Waterloo Place just as the insurance-offices with which that district abounds were being closed for the half-holiday, and the insurance-clerks, young gentlemen who, for the most part, mould themselves in dress and manners upon Government officials, took mental notes of Paul's clothes, and determined to have them closely imitated so soon as the state of their salaries permitted. Quite unconscious of this sincerest flattery, Paul continued his walk, striking across into Piccadilly, and lounging leisurely along until he came to the Green Park, which he entered, and sat down for a few minutes. It was the dull time of the day—when the lower half of society was at dinner, and the upper half at luncheon—and there was scarcely anyone about. After a short rest, Paul looked at his watch, and muttering to himself, "She can't have started yet; I may just as well have the satisfaction of letting my eyes rest on her as she walks to the Gardens," he rose, and turned his steps back again. He turned up Bond Street, and

off through Conduit Street into George Street, Hanover Square, and there, just by St. George's Church, he stopped.

Not to the church, however, was his attention directed, but to the house immediately opposite to it. A big, red-faced, old-fashioned house, fresh painted and pointed, with plate-glass windows in its lower stories, and bronzed knockers, and shining bell-pulls, looking like a portly dowager endeavouring to assume modern airs and graces. Carriages kept driving up, and depositing old and young ladies, and the door, on which was an enormous brass plate with "Madame Clarisse," in letters nearly half a foot long, was perpetually being flung open by a page with a very shiny face, produced by a judicious combination of yellow soap and friction—a page who, in his morning-jacket ruled with red lines, looked like a page of an account-book. Paul Derinzy knew many of these carriage-brought people—for Madame Clarisse was the fashionable milliner of London, and had none but the very greatest of fine ladies in her *clientèle*—and many of them knew him; but on the present occasion he carefully shrouded himself from observation behind one of the pillars of the church portico. There he remained in an agony of impatience, fidgeting about, looking at his watch, glaring up at the bright-faced house, and anathematising the customers, until the clock in the church-tower above him chimed the half-hour past two. Then he became more fidgety than ever. Before, he had taken short turns up and down the street, always returning sharply to the same spot, and looking round as though he had expected some remarkable alteration to have taken place during his ten seconds' absence; now, he stood behind the pillar, never attempting to move from the spot, but constantly peering across the way at Madame Clarisse's great hall-door.

Within five minutes of the chiming of the clock, the great hall-door was opened so quietly that it was perfectly apparent the demonstrative page was not behind it. A young woman, simply and elegantly dressed in a tight-fitting black silk gown, and a small straw bonnet trimmed with green ribbon, with a black lace shawl thrown loosely across her shoulders and hanging down behind, after a French fashion then in vogue,

passed out, closing the door softly behind her, and started off in the direction of the Park. Then Paul Derinzy left his hiding-place, and, at a discreet distance, followed in pursuit.

There must have been something very odd or very attractive in the personal appearance of this young woman, for she undoubtedly attracted a vast deal of attention as she passed through the streets. It would require something special, one would imagine, to intervene between a man and the toothache; and yet a gentleman seated in a dentist's ante-room in George Street, with a face swollen to twice its natural size, and all out of drawing, and vainly endeavouring to solace himself, and to forget the coming wrench, with the pleasant pages of a ten-years'-old *Bentley's Miscellany*, flung the book aside as he saw the girl go by, and crammed himself into a corner of the window to look after her retreating figure. Two sporting gentlemen standing at the freshly-sanded door of Limmer's Hotel, smoking cigars, and muttering to each other in whispers of forthcoming "events," suspended their conversation and exchanged a rapid wink as she flitted by them. The old boys sunning themselves in Bond Street, pottering into Ebers' for their stalls, or pricing fish at Groves's, were very much fluttered by the girl's transient appearance among them. The little head was carried very erect, and there must have been something in the expression of the face which daunted the veterans, and prevented them from addressing her. One or two gave chase, but soon found out that the gouty feet so neatly incased in varnished boots had no chance with this modern Atalanta, who sailed away without a check, looking neither to the right nor to the left. Nor were men her only admirers; ladies sitting in their carriages at shop-doors would look at her half in wonderment, half in admiration, and whisper to each other: "What a pretty girl!" and these compliments pleased her immensely, and brought the colour to her face, adding to her beauty.

She crossed into the Park through Grosvenor Gate, and taking the path that lay immediately in front of her, went straight ahead about half-way between the Serpentine and the Bayswater Road, then through the little iron gate into Kensington Gardens, and across the turf for some distance until she

came in sight of a little avenue of trees, through which glimmered the shining waters of the Round Pond, backed by the rubicund face of stout old Kensington Palace. Then she slackened her pace a little, and began to look around her. There were but few, very few people near: two or three valetudinarians sunning themselves on such of the benches as were in sufficient repair; a few children playing about while their nursemaids joined forces and abused their employers; a shabby-genteel man eating a sandwich of roll-and-sausage—obviously his dinner—in a shamefaced way, and drinking short gulps out of a tin flask under the shadow of his hat; and a vagabond dog or two, delighted at having escaped the vigilance of the park-keeper, and snapping, yelping, and performing acrobatic feats of tumbling, out of what were literally pure animal spirits. Valetudinarians, children, nursemaids, and dogs were evidently not what the girl had come to see, for she stopped, struck the stick-handle of her open parasol against her shoulder, and murmured, "How provoking!" Just at that instant Paul Derinzy, who had been following her tolerably closely, touched her arm. She started, wheeled swiftly round, and her eyes brightened and the flush rose in her cheeks as she cried:

"Oh, Mr. Douglas!"

"'Mr. Douglas,' Daisy!" said Paul Derinzy, with uplifted eyebrows; "'and why this courtesy,' as we say in Sir Walter Scott?"

"I mean Paul," said the girl; "but you startled me so, I scarcely knew what I said."

"Ah, 'Paul' is much better. The idea of your calling me anything else!"

"I don't know, I rather think you're 'Mr. Douglas' just now. You're always 'Mr. Douglas,' recollect, when I'm at all displeased with you, and I've lots of things for you to explain to-day."

"Fire away, child! Let's turn out of the path first, in amongst these trees. So—that is better. Now then, what is the first?—by Jove, pet, how stunning you look to-day!"

A vulgar but expressive term, and one in general acceptance ten years ago. One, too, by no means inexpressive of the girl's

beauty, for she was beautiful, and in a style that was then uncommon. She had red hair. Nowadays red hair is by no means uncommon; it may be seen hanging in bunches in the *coiffeurs'* shops, and, with black roots, on the heads of most of the Dryads of the Wood. Ten years ago, to have red hair was to be subjected to chaff by the street-boys, to be called "carrots" by the vulgar, and to be pitied silently by the polite. Red hair *au naturel* was almost unknown—it was greased, and pomatumed, and cosmetiqued, and flattened into *bandeaux*, and twisted into ringlets, and deepened and darkened and disguised in every possible shape and way; it was "auburn," it was "chestnut," it was anything but red. This girl had red hair, and hated it, but was too proud to attempt to disguise it. So she wore it in a thick dry mass, heavy and crisp, and low on the forehead, and it suited her dead-white skin, creamy white, showing the rising blood on the smallest provocation, and her thin cheeks, and her pointed chin, and her gray eyes, and her long, but slightly impertinent, nose. No wonder people in the street turned round and stared at her; they had been educated up to the raven locks, and the short straight noses, and the rounded chin style of beauty, formed on the true classical model, and they could not understand this kind of thing except in a picture of Mr. Dante Rossetti, or young Mr. Millais, or some of those other new-fangled artists who, they supposed, were clever, but who were decidedly "odd."

There was no doubt about her beauty, though, and none about her style. So Paul Derinzy thought, as he looked her up and down on saying the last-recorded words, and marked her tall, *svelte*, lissom figure; her neatly-shod, neatly-gloved feet and hands; her light walk, so free and yet so stately; and the simple elegance of her dress.

"You are a stunner, pet, and I adore you! There, having delivered myself of those mild observations, I will suffer you to proceed. You had a lot of things to say to me? Fire away!"

"In the first place, why were you not here to meet me, Mr. Douglas?"

"Again that detestable formality! Daisy, I swear, if you

call me that again, I'll kiss you,—*coram publico, en plein air*, here before everybody; and that child, who will not take its eyes off us, will swallow the hoopstick it is now sucking, and its death will lie at your door."

"No, but seriously—where have you been?"

"You want to know? Well, then, I don't mind telling you that I've followed you every foot of the way from George Street. Ah, you may well blush, young woman! I was the heartbroken witness of your flirtation with those youths in Bond Street."

"Horrid old things! No, but, Paul, did you really follow me from Madame's? Were you there to see me come out?"

"My child, I was there for three mortal quarters of an hour before you came out."

"That was very nice of you; *bien gentil*, as Mdlle. Augustine says. I wish you knew Mdlle. Augustine, she's a very great friend of Madame's."

"I wish I was Mdlle. Augustine. I say, Daisy, doesn't Madame Clarisse want a male hand in the business—something in the light-porter line? I'm sure it would suit me better than that beastly office."

"What office, Paul?"

"Why, my office, darling; where I go every day. Do you mean to say I didn't tell you about that, Daisy?"

"Certainly not; you've told me nothing about yourself."

"Well, you see, I've known you so short a time, and seen so little of you. Oh yes, I go to an office."

"Do you mean to say you're a clerk?"

"Well, yes—not to put too fine a point upon it, I suppose I am."

"What! a lawyer's clerk?"

"No, no! D—n it all, Daisy, not as bad as that, nothing of the kind. Government office, Civil servant of the Crown, and all that kind of thing, don't you understand? Her Majesty's Stannaries—one of the principal departments of the State."

"And do you go there every day, Mr.—I mean, Paul?"

"Well, I'm supposed to, my darling; point of fact, I do go there—generally."

"Why don't you let me write to you there?"

"Write to me there! at the office! My dear child, there are the most stringent rules of the service against it. Any man in the office receiving a letter from a lady at the office would be —would be had up before the House of Commons, and very probably committed to the Tower!"

"What a curious thing! I thought you had nothing to do."

"Nothing to do! My darling Daisy, no galley-slave who tugs at the what-d'ye-call-em—oar—works harder than I do, as, indeed, Lord Palmerston has often acknowledged."

"And you're well paid for it? I mean, you get lots of money?" asked the girl, looking straight up into his face.

"Ye-yes, child. Yes, statecraft is tolerably well remunerated. Besides, men in my position have generally something else to live upon, some private means, some allowances from their people."

"Their people? Oh, you mean their families. Yes, that must be very nice. Have you any—any people?"

"Yes, Daisy, my father and mother are both alive."

"They don't live with you in Hanover Street?"

"Oh no; they live down in the country, a long way off—down in the West of England."

"And they're rich, I suppose?"

"Yes, they're very fairly off."

"And how many brothers and sisters have you, Paul?"

"None, darling; I am the only child; the entire hopes of the family are centred in this charming creature. Have you finished your questions, you inquisitive puss?"

"Quite. Did it sound inquisitive? I daresay it did; I daresay my foolish chatter was boring you."

"My pet Daisy, I'd sooner hear what you call your foolish chatter than anything in the world—much sooner than Tamberlik's *ut de poitrine*, that all the musical people are raving about just now. See, darling, let us sit down here. Take off your glove—this right glove. No? what nonsense! I may kiss your hand; there's no one looking but that fat child in the brown-holland knickerbockers, and if he doesn't turn his eyes away, I'll make a face at him, and frighten him into convulsions. There; now tell me about yourself."

"About myself? I've nothing to tell, Paul, except that we're horribly busy, and Madame plagues our lives out."

"Had you any difficulty in getting out to-day? You thought you would have when last I saw you."

"Dreadful difficulty; Madame fussed and fumed, and declared that she could not possibly let me go; but I insisted; and as the customers like me, and always ask for me, I suppose I am too valuable for her to say much."

"By the way, Daisy, do any men ever come to your place—with the women, I mean?"

"Sometimes; the husbands or the brothers of the ladies."

"Exactly. I suppose they don't—I mean, I suppose you don't—what a fool I am! No matter. Are you going back there this evening?"

"Yes, Madame would not let me come until I promised to be back by six to see the parcels off. Madame's going to the Opera to-night, and she'll be dressing at the time, and she must have somebody there she can depend upon."

"And you are the somebody, Daisy? How deuced nice to be able to reckon upon finding you anywhere when one wanted you! No, I say; no one can see my arm, it's quite covered by your shawl, and it fits so beautifully round your waist, just as if you had been measured for it at Madame Clarisse's. Well, and what time will you be free?"

"Between eight and nine, I suppose; nearer nine."

"May I meet you when you come away, Daisy? Will you come with me to the theatre?"

"No, Paul; you know perfectly well that I will not. You know it is not of the slightest use proposing such things to me."

"Yes, I know it's of no use; I wish it were; it would be so jolly, and—then you'll go straight back to South Molton Street?"

"Yes; to my garret!" and she laughed, rather a hard laugh, as she said these words.

"Don't say that, Daisy; I hate to hear you say that word."

"It's the right word, Paul, horrid or not. However, I shall get out of it some day, I suppose."

"How?" asked Paul, withdrawing his arm from her waist, and looking fixedly at her.

"How should I know?" said the girl, with the same hard laugh. "Feet foremost, perhaps, in my coffin. Somehow, at all events."

"You're in a curious mood to-day, Daisy."

"Am I? You'll see me in many curious moods, if we continue to know each other long, Paul—which I very much doubt, by the way."

"Daisy, what makes you say that? You've not seen anyone —you've not heard—I mean, you don't intend to break with me, Daisy?"

"There is nothing to break, my poor Paul!"

"Whose fault is that? Whose fault is it that you remain in what you call your garret? Whose fault is it that you are compelled to obey Madame Clarisse, and to dance attendance on her infernal customers? Not mine, you must allow that. You know what is the dearest wish of my heart—you know how often I have proposed that——"

"Stop, sir," said Daisy, laying her ungloved hand upon his mouth; "you know how often I have forbidden you to touch upon that subject, and now you dare to disobey merely because I was foolish enough to be off my guard for a moment, and to let some grumbling escape my lips. No, no, Paul, let us be sensible; it is very well as it is. We enjoy these stolen meetings; at least, I do——"

"And you think I don't, I suppose? Oh no, certainly not!"

"You very rude bear, why do you interrupt me? I don't think anything of the sort. I know you enjoy them too. Then why should we bother ourselves about the future?"

"No; but you don't understand, Daisy. It seems so deuced hard for me to have to see you for such a short time, and then for you to have to go away, and——"

"Don't you think it is quite as hard for me?"

"But then I'm so fond of you, don't you know! I love you so much, Daisy."

"And do you imagine I don't care for you? I don't say how much, but I know it must be more than a little."

"How do you know that, darling?"

"Because my love for you has conquered my pride, Paul.

That shows me at once, without anything else, that I must love you. Do you think if I didn't care for you that I would consent to all this subterfuge and mystery which always surrounds us? Do you imagine that I have no eyes and no perception? Do you think I don't notice that you have chosen this place for our meeting because it is quite quiet and secluded? That when anyone having the least appearance of belonging to your world comes near us, you are in an agony, and turn your head aside, or cover your face with your hand, lest you should be recognised? Do you think I haven't noticed all this? And do you think I don't know that all these precautions are taken, and all this fear is undergone, because you are walking with *me?*"

"My darling Daisy——"

"It's my own fault, Paul. Understand, I quite allow that. I am not in your rank of life. I am Madame Clarisse's showwoman; and I ought to look for my lovers amongst Messrs. Lewis and Allenby's young drapers, or the assistants at Godfrey and Cooke's, the chemists. They would be very proud to be seen with me, and would probably take me out on Sundays, along the Hammersmith Road in a four-wheel chaise. However, I hate chemists and drapers and four-wheel chaises, and prefer walking in this gloomy grove with you, Paul."

"You're a queer child," said Paul, with a sigh of relief at the subject being, as he thought, ended, and with a gratified smile at the pleasant words Daisy had last spoken.

"Yes," she said; "queer enough, Heaven knows! I suppose my dislike to those kind of people is because I was decently born and educated; and I can't forget that even now, when I'm only a milliner's shop-girl. But with all my queerness, I was right in what I said, wasn't I, Paul?"

"Why, my darling, it's a question, don't you see. I don't care for myself; I should be only too proud for people to think that I—that a girl like you would be about with me, and that kind of thing; but it's one's people, don't you know, and all that infernal cant and conventionality."

"Exactly. Now let us take a turn up and down the gloomy grove, and talk about something else."

She rose as she spoke, and passed her arm through his, and

they began slowly pacing up and down among the trees. The "something else" which formed the subject of their talk it is not very difficult to divine, and though apparently deeply interesting to them, it would not be worth transcription. It was the old, old subject, which retains its glamour in all countries and in all places, and which was as entrancing in that bit of cockney paradise, with the smoke-discoloured trees waving above them, and the dirty sheep nibbling near them, as it was to Œnone on Ida, or to Desdemona in Venice.

So they strolled about, trying endless variations of the same tune, until it became time for Daisy to think of returning to her place of business. Paul, after a little inward struggle with himself, proposed to walk with her as far as the Marble Arch; there would be no one in that part of the Park, he thought, of whom he need have the slightest fear; and Daisy appearing to be delighted, they started off. Just before they reached the end of the turf by the Marble Arch they stopped to say adieux. These apparently took a long time to get over, for Daisy's delicate little glove was retained in Paul's grasp, her face was upturned, and he was looking into it with love and passion in his eyes. So that they neither of them observed a tall gentleman who had just entered the gates, and was striking across the Park when his eyes fell upon them, and who honoured them, not with a mere cursory glance, but with an intense and a prolonged stare. This gentleman was George Wainwright.

CHAPTER V.

FAMILY POLITICS.

"WAS I a-dreamin', or did my Ann really tell me that somebody'd come down late last night in a po'-shay and driven to the Tower?" asked Mrs. Powler, the morning after her little

supper-party, of Mrs. Jupp, who, whenever she could find a minute to spare from the troubles of housekeeping, was in the habit of "dropping-in" to gossip with her older and less active neighbour.

"You weren't dreamin', dear; at least, I should say not, unless you have dreams like them chief butlers and bakers, and other cur'ous pipple in the Bible one reads of, which had their dreams 'terpreted. It's quite true—not that it's made more so by your Ann having said it; for a more shameful little liar there don't talk in this parish!" said Mrs. Jupp, getting very red in the face.

"You never took kindly to that gell, Mrs. Jupp," said the old lady placidly—she was far too rich to get in a rage—"you never took kindly to that gell from the first, when I took her out of charity, owin' to her father's being throwed out of work on account of Jupp's cousin stoppin' payment."

Though said in Mrs. Powler's calmest tones, and without a change of expression on the speaker's childish old face, this was meant to be a hard hit, and was received as such by Mrs. Jupp.

"I don't know nothin' 'bout stoppin' payment, nor Jupp's cousins," said that lady, with a redundancy of negatives and a very shrill voice; "my own fam'ly has always paid their way, and Jupp has a 'count at the Devon Bank, where his writin' is as good as gold, and will be so long as I live. But I *du* know that I've never liked that gell Ann Bradshaw since she told a passil o' lies about my Joey and the hen-roost!"

"Well, well, never mind Ann Bradshaw," said Mrs. Powler, who had had vast experience of Mrs. Jupp's powers of boredom in connection with the subject of her Joey and the hen-roost; "never mind about the gell; I allays kip her out o' your way, and I must ha' been main thoughtless when I let her name slip out just now before you. So someone did come in a po'-shay last night, then, and did drive to the Tower? Do you know who it was?"

"Not of my own knowledge," replied Mrs. Jupp in a softened voice—it would never have done to have quarrelled with Mrs. Powler, from whom she derived much present benefit, and from whom she expected a legacy—"but Groper, who was up there

this morning wi' the sallt water for the Captain's bath, says it's the Doctor."

"Lor', now!" said Mrs. Powler, lifting up her hands in astonishment; "I can't fancy why passons go messin' wi' sallt water, and baths, and such-like. They must be main dirty, one would think, to take such a lot o' washin'. I'm sure Powler and I never did such redick'lous nonsense, and we was always well thought of, I believe. Lor', now, I've bin and forgotten who you said it was come down. Who was it, Harriet?"

"The Doctor from London—Wheelwright, or some such name; he that comes down three or four times a-year just to look at Mrs. Derinzy."

"He must be a cliver doctor, I du 'low, if his lookin' at her is enough to do her good," said Mrs. Powler, who was extremely literal in all things; "not but what she's that bad, poor soul, that anything must be a comfort to her."

"Did you ever hear tell what was ezackly the matter wi' the Captain's lady, Mrs. Powler?" asked Mrs. Jupp mysteriously.

"Innards," said the old lady in a hollow voice, laying her hand on the big mother-o'-pearl buckle by which her broad sash was kept together.

"Ah, but what sort of innards?" demanded Mrs. Jupp, who was by no means to be put off with a general answer on such an important subject.

"That I dunno," said Mrs. Powler, unwillingly confessing her ignorance. "Dr. Barton attends her in a or'nary way, but I niver heerd him say."

"It must be one of them obstinit diseases as we women has," said Mrs. Jupp, "as though—not to fly in the face of Providence—but as though child-bearin' wasn't enough to have us let off all the rest!"

"She niver takes no med'cine," said Mrs. Powler, who firmly believed in the virtues of the Pharmacopœia, and whose pride it was that the deceased Powler, in his last illness, had swallowed "quarts and quarts." "I know that from that fair-haired young chap that mixes Barton's drugs,—his mother was a kind o' c'nexion o' Powler's, and I had 'im up to tea a Sunday week, and asked him."

"Well, I'd like very much to know what is the matter wi' Mrs. Derinzy," said Mrs. Jupp, harking back. "I ha' my own idea on the subjick; but I'd like to know for sure."

"If you're so cur'ous, you'd better ask Dr. Barton. He's just gone passt the window, and I 'spose he'll look in;" and almost before Mrs. Powler had finished her sentence there came a soft rap at the room-door, the handle was gently turned, and Dr. Barton presented himself.

He was a short, thickset, strongly-built man of about fifty-five, with close curly gray hair, bright eyes, mottled complexion, large hooked nose. He was dressed in a black cut-away coat, stained buff waistcoat, drab riding-breeches, and top-boots. He had a way of laying his head on one side, and altogether reminded one irresistibly of Punch.

"*Good*-morning, ladies," said the doctor, in a squeaky, throaty little voice, which tended to heighten the resemblance; "I seem to ha' dropped in just in the nick o' time, by the looks of ye. Mayhap you were talking about me. Mrs. Jupp, you don't mean to say that——" and the little man whispered the conclusion of the sentence behind his hat to Mrs. Jupp, while he privately winked at Mrs. Powler.

"Get 'long wi' ye, du!" said Mrs. Jupp, her face suffused with crimson.

"I niver see such a man in all my born days," said old Mrs. Powler, with whom the doctor was a special favourite, laughing until the tears made watercourses of her wrinkles, and were genially irrigating her face. "No; no such luck, I tell her."

"Well, as to luck, that all a matter o' taste," said Mrs. Jupp; "we were talking about something quite different to that."

"What was it?" asked the doctor.

"'Bout Mrs. D'rinzy's health Harriet was asking," explained Mrs. Powler.

"A-h!" said the doctor, shaking his head, and looking very solemn.

"Is she so bad as all that?" asked Mrs. Jupp, who was visibly impressed by the medico's pantomime.

"Great sufferer, great sufferer!" said the little man, with a repetition of the head-shake.

"Well, but she gets about; comes down into t' village, and such-like," argued Mrs. Powler.

"Oh yes; no reason why she shouldn't; more she gets about, indeed, the better," said the doctor.

"It's innards, I suppose?" asked Mrs. Jupp, whose craving for particulars of Mrs. Derinzy's disorder was yet unsatisfied.

"Well, partially, partially," said the doctor, slowly rubbing the side of his nose with the handle of his riding-whip; "it's a complication, a mixture, which it would be difficult to get an unprofessional person to understand."

"Talkin' o' that, Barton," said Mrs. Powler, "I s'pose you know the London doctor came down last night?"

"Dr. Wainwright? Oh yes; I was up at the Tower just now to meet him. As I'm left in charge of Mrs. Derinzy, we always have a consultation whenever he comes down."

"I s'pose he's a raal cliver man, this Wheelwright, or they wouldn't have him come all this way to see her," said Mrs. Powler.

"Clever!" echoed the doctor; "the very first man of the day; the very first!"

"Then why wasn't he sent for to see Sir Herc'les when he was laid up that bad last spring?" asked Mrs. Jupp; "there was another one come down from London then."

"That was quite a different case, my dear madam. Sir Hercules Dingo was laid up with gout; Mrs. Derinzy's complaint is not gout; and Dr. Wainwright is the first man of the day in—well, in such cases as Mrs. Derinzy's."

No more specific information than this could Mrs. Jupp obtain from the doctor, who was "that close when he liked," as his friends said of him, that even the blandishments of Mrs. Barton failed to extract any of his professional secrets. So Mrs. Jupp gave it up in despair, and began talking on general topics. Be sure the conversation did not progress far without the Derinzys again cropping up in it. They were staple subjects of discussion in Beachborough, and the most preposterous stories regarding them and their origin, whence and why they came to the remote Devonshire village, and the reason for their enforced stay there, obtained, if not credence, at least circulation. What their real history was, I now propose to tell.

Five-and-twenty years before the date of this story, the firm of Derinzy and Sons was well known and highly esteemed in the City of London. They were supposed to have been originally of Polish extraction, and their name to have been Derinski; but it had been painted up as Derinzy for years on the door-posts of their warehouse in Gough Square, Fleet Street, and it was so spelt on all the invoices, bill-heads, and other commercial literature of the firm. Warehouses, invoices, and bill-heads? Yes, despite their Polish extraction and distinguished name, the Derinzys were neither more nor less than furriers—wholesale, and on a large scale, it was true, but still furriers. Their business was enormous, and their profits immense. The old father, Peter Derinzy, who had founded the firm, and whose business talent and industry were the main causes of its success, had given up active attendance, and was beginning to take life leisurely. He came down twice a week, perhaps, in a handsome carriage-and-pair, to Gough Square, just glanced over the books, and occasionally looked at some samples of skins, on which his opinion —still the most reliable in the whole trade—was requested by his son, and then went back to his mansion at Muswell Hill, where his connection with business was unknown or ignored, and where he was Squire Derinzy, dwelling in luxury, and passing his time in the superintendence of his graperies and pineries, his forcing-houses and his farm.

The affairs of the house did not suffer by the old gentleman's absence. In his eldest son Paul, on whom the command devolved in his father's absence, the senior partner had a representative possessing all the experience and tact which he had gained, combined with the youth and energy which he had lost. Men of high standing in the City of London, many years his seniors, were glad to know Paul Derinzy, eager to ask his advice, and, what is quite a different matter, frequently not unwilling to take it in regard to the great speculations of the day. The merchants from the North of Europe with whom he transacted business—and to all of whom he spoke in their own language, without the slightest betrayal of foreign accent or lack of idiom—looked upon him as an absolute wonder, more especially when contrasted with his own countrymen, who for

the most part spoke nothing but English, and little of that beyond oaths, and spread his renown far and wide. He was a tall, high-shouldered, big-boned man, prematurely bald, and, being very short-sighted, wore a large pair of spectacles, which impelled his younger brother Alexis, then fresh from school, and just received into the counting-house, to be initiated into the mysteries of trade preparatory to being made a partner, to call him "Gig-lamps." Paul Derinzy was not a good-tempered man, and at any time would have disliked this impertinence; but addressed to him as it was, before the clerks, it nettled him exceedingly. He forbade its repetition under pain of summary punishment, and when it was repeated, being a big strong man, he caught his younger brother by the collar, dragged him out of the counting-house to a secluded part of the warehouse, and then and there thrashed him to his heart's content. It was, perhaps, this summary treatment, combined with a dislike for desk-work and indoor confinement, that induced Master Alexis to resign his clerical stool and to suggest to his father the propriety of purchasing for him a commission in the army. Old Derinzy was by no means disposed to act upon this idea, but his wife, who worshipped and spoiled her youngest son, urged it very strongly; and as Paul, who was of course consulted, recommended it as by far the best thing that could be done for his brother, the old gentleman at last gave way, and in a very short time young Alexis was gazetted as cornet in a hussar regiment then on its way home from India, and joined the depôt at Canterbury.

After that little episode, Paul Derinzy took small heed of his brother's proceedings, or, indeed, of anything save his business, in which he seemed to be entirely absorbed. He was there early and late, taking his dinner at a tavern, and retiring to chambers in Chancery Lane, where he read philosophical treatises and abstruse foreign philosophical works until bed-time. He had no intimate friends, and never went into society. Even after his mother's death, when he spent most of his leisure time, such as it was, at Muswell Hill, with his father, then become very old and feeble, he shrank from meeting the neighbours, and was looked upon as an oddity and a recluse.

In the fulness of time old Peter Derinzy died, leaving, it was said, upwards of a hundred thousand pounds. By his will he bequeathed twenty thousand pounds to his second son, Captain Alexis Derinzy, while the whole of the rest of his fortune went to his son Paul, who was left sole executor.

Captain Alexis Derinzy made use of very strong language when he learned the exact amount of the legacy bequeathed to him by his father's will. He had been always given to understand, he said, that the governor was a hundred-thousand-pound man, and he thought it deuced hard that he shouldn't have had at least a third of what was left, specially considering that he was a married man with a family, whereas that money-grubbing old tradesman, his elder brother, had nobody but himself to look after. The statement of Captain Derinzy's marriage was so far correct. About two years previous to his father's death, the Captain being at the time, like another captain famed in song, "in country quarters," had made the acquaintance of a young lady, the daughter of a clever, ne'er-do-weel, pot-walloping artist, who, when sober, did odd bits of portrait-painting, and, among other jobs, had painted correct likenesses of Captain Derinzy's two chargers. Captain Derinzy's courtship of the artist's daughter, unlike that of his prototype in verse, was carried on with the strictest decorum, not, one is bound to say, from any fault of the Captain's, who wished and intended to assimilate it to scores of other such affairs which he had had under what he considered similar circumstances. But the truth was that he had never met anyone like Miss Gertrude Skrymshire before. A pretty woman, delicate-looking, and thoroughly feminine, she was far more of an old soldier than the Captain, with all his barrack training and his country-garrison experience. Years before, when she was a mere child of fourteen, she had made up her mind, after experience of her father's career and prospects, that Bohemianism, for a woman at least, was a most undesirable state, and she had determined that she would marry either for wealth or position; the latter preferable, she thought, as the former might be afterwards attainable by her own ready wit and cleverness; while if she married a *bon bourgeois*, she must be content to remain in Bloomsbury, Bedfordshire, or wherever

she might be placed, and must abandon all hope of rising. When Captain Derinzy first came fluttering round her, she saw the means to her end, and determined to profit thereby. She was a very pretty young woman of her style, red and white, with black eyes and flattened black hair, altogether very like those Dutch dolls fashionable at that period, who were made of shiny composition down to their busts, but then diverged abruptly into calico and sawdust. She had a trim waist and a neat ankle, and what is called nowadays a very "fetching" style, and she made desperate havoc with Captain Derinzy's heart; so much so, that when she declined with scorn to listen to any of the eccentric—to say the least of them—propositions which he made to her, and forbade him her presence for daring to make them, he, after staying away one day, during which he was intensely wretched, and would have taken to drinking but that he had tried it before without effect, and would have drowned himself but that he did not want to die, came down and made an open declaration of his love to Gertrude, and a formal proposal for her hand to Skrymshire *père*.

Alick Derinzy had had Luck for his friend several times in his life; he had "pulled off" some good things in sweepstakes, and been fortunate in his speculations on "events;" but he never made such a *coup* as when he took Gertrude Skrymshire for his wife. She undertook the *ménage* at once, sold off his unnecessary horses, and paid off outstanding ticks; made him get an invitation for himself and her to Muswell Hill, and spent a week there, during which she ingratiated herself with the old gentleman, and specially with Paul; speedily took the reins of government into her hands, and drove her husband skilfully, without ever letting him feel the bit. When his father died, and Alick was for crying out at the smallness of his legacy, Gertrude stopped his mouth, pointing out that they had a sufficiency to live on, to which the sale of her husband's commission would add; that they could go and live in a small house in a good suburb of town, where they could make it very comfortable for Paul, who would doubtless see a good deal of them, and who, as he was never likely to marry, would most probably leave his enormous fortune to *their* Paul, their only son, who, of

course without any definite views, had been named after his uncle.

It was a notable scheme, well-planned and well-executed, but it failed. Alick sold out, and they took a pleasant little house at Brompton, a suburb then not much known, and principally inhabited, as now, by actors and authors; and they furnished it charmingly, and Gertrude herself went down in her deep mourning into the City, and penetrated to Paul's sanctum in Gough Square, and insisted on his coming to stay a day or two with them, and gained his promise that he would come. On her return she said she had found Paul very much altered, but when her husband asked her in what manner, she could not explain herself. Alick himself explained it in his own peculiar barrack-room and billiard-table phraseology, after he had seen his brother, expressing his opinion that that worthy was "going off his head, by G—!"

No doubt Paul Derinzy was a changed man. It was not that he looked much older than his years—that he had always done; but his skin was discoloured, his eyes lustreless, his head bowed, his spirit gone. He said himself that twenty years' incessant labour without any holiday had told upon him, and that he was determined at last to take some rest. He should start immediately with Herr Schadow, one of their largest customers, for Berlin and St. Petersburg, and should probably be away for some months. Dockress, who had been brought up from boyhood in Gough Square, and who knew every trick and turn of the trade, would manage the business during his absence, and he should go away perfectly satisfied that things would go on just as smoothly as if he were there to overlook them.

Paul Derinzy carried out his intention. He went away to the Continent with Herr Schadow, and Mr. Dockress took charge of the business in Gough Square. He heard several times from his principal within the next few weeks, letters dated from various places, their contents always relating to business. Mrs. Alick had also several letters from her brother-in-law, but to her he wrote on different topics. He seemed to be in wonderful spirits, wrote long descriptions of the places he had visited,

and humorous accounts of people he had met; said he felt himself quite a different man, that he had just begun to enjoy life, and looked upon all his earlier years as completely lost to him. He loathed the very name of business, he said, and hated the mere idea of coming back to England. He should certainly go as far as St. Petersburg, and prolong his stay abroad as long as he felt amused by it. He arrived in St. Petersburg. Dockress heard of him from there relative to consignment of some special skins which he had been lucky enough to get hold of, and which his old business instinct, not to be so easily shaken off as he imagined, prompted him to buy. Mrs. Alick also heard from him a fortnight later; he described the place as delightful, the society as charming, said he was "going out a good deal," and was thoroughly enjoying himself. Then nothing was heard of him for weeks by the family in the pretty little house at Brompton, and Mrs. Alick became full of wonderment as to his movements. Dockress could have given her some information. It is true that he had had no letters from his chief, but a nephew of Schadow's, who was a clerk in the Gough Square house, had had a hint dropped to him by his uncle that it was not improbable that the head of the house would, on his return, which would be soon, bring with him a wife, as he was supposed to be very much in love with a young French lady, a governess in a distinguished Russian family where he visited. Schadow junior communicated this intelligence to Dockress junior, who sat at the same desk with him, who communicated it to Dockress senior, who whistled, and, as soon as his son was out of hearing, muttered aloud that it was "a rum go."

"Rum" as it was, though, it was true. A short time afterwards Dockress received official intimation of the fact, and the same post brought the news to Mrs. Alick. Paul's note to his sister-in-law was very short. It simply said that she and Alexis would probably be surprised to hear that he was about to be married to Mdlle. Delille, a young French lady, whom he had met in society at St. Petersburg. They were to be married at once, and would shortly after set out for England, not, however, with the intention of remaining there. He infinitely preferred living abroad, so that he should merely return for the purpose of

settling his business, and should then retire to the Continent for the rest of his life.

Alick Derinzy gave a great guffaw as his wife read out this epistle to him, and chaffed her in his ponderous way, referring to the counting of chickens before they were hatched, and the hallooing before you were out of the wood, and other apposite proverbs.

"That's rather a bust-up for your scheme, Gertrude," he said with a loud laugh, "old Paul going to marry; and he's just one of those fellows that have a large family late in life; and a neat chance for *our* Paul's coming in for any of the old boy's money. That game is u-p, Mrs. Derinzy."

But Mrs. Derinzy, though she looked serious at the news which the letter contained, and shook her head at her husband's speech, said there was no knowing what Time had in store for them, and they must wait and see.

They waited, and in due course they saw—Paul's wife, Mrs. Derinzy: a pretty, slight, fragile little woman, with large black eyes, olive complexion, and odd restless ways. Mrs. Alick set her down as "thoroughly French;" Alick spoke of her as a "rum little party;" but they neither of them saw much of her. Paul brought her to dine two or three times, and the women called upon each other, but the newly-married pair were so thoroughly occupied with theatre-goings, and opera-visitings, and society-frequenting, that it was with the greatest difficulty they could be induced to find a free night during the month they stayed in town. London did not seem capable of producing enough pleasure or excitement for Paul Derinzy. He was like a boy in the ardour of his yearning for fresh amusement, he entered into everything with wild delight, and seemed as though he should never tire of taking his pretty little wife about, and what Alexis called "showing her off."

During that month the great house of Derinzy and Sons ceased to exist, and in the next issue of the great red book, the *Post-Office Directory*, the name which had been so respected and so highly thought of was not to be found. Certainly Paul Derinzy retained a share in its fortunes, but he sold the largest part of the business to Dockress and Schadow, whose friends

came forth nobly to help them in the purchase, and it was under their joint names that the house was in future conducted.

Then Paul and his wife went away, and were only occasionally heard of. It had been their intention to travel about, and they were apparently carrying it out, for Paul's letters to Mrs. Alick, with whom he still corresponded, were dated from various places, and he could only give her vague addresses where to reply. They were passing the winter at Florence, when he wrote to his sister-in-law that a little daughter had been born to them, but that his wife had been in great peril, for some time her life had been despaired of, and even then, at the time of writing, she was seriously ill. Alick Derinzy guffawed again at this news, remarking that their Paul's nose was out of joint now, and no mistake. Their Paul, then a stalwart boy of four years old, who was playing about the room at the time, exclaimed, "No, my nose all right!" at the same time grasping that organ with his chubby hand; and Mrs. Derinzy checked her husband's unseemly mirth, and remarked that since his brother had married, it was more to their interest that his child should be a girl than a boy. There was an interval of six months before another letter arrived to say that Mrs. Paul remained very ill, that her constitution had received a shock which it was doubtful whether it would ever recover, but that the little girl was thriving well. Paul added that he was in treaty for a place on the Lake of Geneva of which he had heard, and that if it suited him the family would most probably settle down there. After another six months Mrs. Alick heard from her brother-in-law that they had settled on the Swiss lake, with a repetition of the statement that his wife was helplessly ill, and the little girl thriving apace. During the four succeeding years very nearly the same news reached the Alick Derinzys at the same intervals—Paul was still located in the Swiss château, his wife remained in the same state of illness, and his little girl still throve.

"No chance for our Paul," said Alexis Derinzy disconsolately.

"Our Paul" was growing into a fine boy, and his father gave himself much mental exercitation as to whether he could "stand the racket" of educating him at Eton or Harrow.

One evening a cab drove up to the door, and a gentleman alighted and asked for Mrs. Derinzy. Alick was, according to his usual practice, at the club, enjoying that pleasant hour's gossip so dear to married gentlemen who are kept rather tightly in hand at home, and which they relinquish with such looks of envy at the happy bachelors or more courageous Benedicks whom they leave behind. But Mrs. Alick was in her very pretty little boudoir, into which she desired the stranger might be shown.

He came in; a man who had probably been tall, but was now bent double, walking with a stick, and then making but slow progress; a man with snow-white hair and long beard of the same hue, wrapped from head to foot in a huge fur coat of foreign make. Mrs. Derinzy saw that he was a gentleman, but did not recognise him. It was not until he advanced to her and mentioned his name that she knew him for her brother-in-law, Paul. She received him very warmly, and he seemed touched and gratified, so far as lay in him. Where were his wife and his little daughter? she asked. They were—over there, in Switzerland, he said with an effort. He was alone, then, in London? He must come and stay with them. No; he had been in London three or four days. He came over on some special business, and he was about to return to the Continent the next day, but he did not like to go without having seen her. He fidgeted about while he stopped, and seemed nervously anxious to be off; but Mrs. Alick, with a woman's tact, began to ask him questions about his child, and he quieted down, and spoke of her with rapture. She was the joy of his soul, he said, the one bright ray in his life, of which, indeed, he spoke in very melancholy terms. Alick came home from his club in due course, and was as surprised as his wife had been at the alteration in Paul's appearance, and took so little pains to disguise his impressions, that Paul himself made allusion to his white hair and his bowed back, and said he had had trouble enough to have broken a much younger and stronger man. He did not say what the trouble was, and they did not like to ask him. Alick had thought it was pecuniary worry; that his brother had "dropped his money," as he phrased it. Mrs. Alick saw no reason to

ascribe it to any such source. But she noticed that her brother-in-law said very little about his wife, and she felt certain that the marriage which had promised so brilliantly had turned out a disappointment, and that the shadow which darkened his life was of home creation.

Paul Derinzy bade adieu to his brother and his sister-in-law that night, and they never saw him again. About a month afterwards he wrote from Switzerland that his wife was dead, that he should give up the château on the lake, and travel for a time, taking the child with him. Ten years passed away, during which news of the travellers came but rarely to the residents in Brompton, who, indeed, thought but little of them. The ex-captain of dragoons had settled down into a quiet, whist-playing, military-club-frequenting fogey; Mrs. Derinzy managed him with as much tact as usual, and with rather a slacker rein; and young Paul, now eighteen years old, was just appointed to the Stannaries Office, when an event occurred which entirely changed the aspect of affairs. This was the elder Paul Derinzy's death, which was communicated to his brother by a telegram from Pau, where it happened. By this telegram Alick was bidden to come to Pau instantly, to take charge of Miss Derinzy, and to be present at the reading of the will. Alick went to Pau, and his wife went with him. They found Annette Derinzy—a tall girl of fourteen, "a little too foreign, and good deal too forward," Mrs. Derinzy pronounced her—prostrated with grief at her recent loss. And they were present at the reading of the will, under which they found themselves constituted guardians of the said Annette Derinzy, who inherited all her father's property, with the exception of a thousand a-year, which was to be paid to them for their trouble during their lives, and five thousand pounds legacy to their son Paul at his father's death. Their authority over Annette was to cease when she came of age at twenty-one, but up to that time they had the power of veto on any marriage engagement she might contract, and any defiance on her part was to be punished by the loss of her fortune, which was to be divided amongst certain charities duly set forth in the will.

"Only five thou. for our poor boy, and that not till we're

dead! and Paul must have left over eighty thousand!" said Captain Derinzy to his wife, when they were in their own room at the hotel after the will had been read.

"Our Paul shall have the eighty thousand," said Mrs. Derinzy in reply.

"The devil he shall!" said the Captain. "Who will give it him?"

"The guardians of his wife!" said Mrs. Derinzy

CHAPTER VI.

MRS. STOTHARD.

MRS. POWLER and Mrs. Jupp were by no means the only persons in Beachborough to whom Mrs. Stothard's position in the household at the Tower afforded subject-matter for gossip. It may be safely asserted that there never was a tea-drinking, followed—as was usually the case among the better clases in that hospitable neighbourhood—by a consumption of alcohol "hot with," at which Mrs. Stothard was not served up as a toothsome morsel, and forthwith torn into shreds, if not by the teeth, at least by the tongues of the assembled company. To those simple minds, all social standing was fixed and unalterable —one must either be mistress or servant; the lines of demarcation were strongly defined; they knew of no softening gradations; and they could not understand Mrs. Stothard. "She hev' her dinner by herself, and her own teapot allays brought to her own room—leastways, 'cept when she do fetch it herself, Miss Annette bein' sleepy or out of sorts, and not likin' to be disturbed by the servants." Such was the report which Nancy Wickstead, who had gone to live as nursemaid up at the Tower soon after the arrival of the family, brought down about this redoubtable woman. The villagers only knew her by report,

by crumbs and fragments of rumours dropped by Nancy Wickstead when she came down among her old familiars for an "evening out," or by the tradesmen who called at the house, and who drew largely on their own imagination for the stories which they told. They had only caught fleeting glimpses of Mrs. Stothard as she passed along the corridor or crossed from room to room, but even those cursory glances entitled them to swagger before their fellow-villagers who had never seen her at all—never. Many of them tried to think they had, and after renewed descriptions of her firmly believed that they had; but it was all an exercitation of their imagination, for they never went to the Tower, and Mrs. Stothard never left it—never, under any pretence. In the two years during which the family had resided at the Tower, Mrs. Stothard had never passed through the entrance-gate. She took exercise sometimes in the grounds; even that but rarely; but she never left them. Young Dobbs, the grocer, a bright spirit, once took it into his head to chaff about her with the servants, to ask who was the "female hermit," and what duties she performed in the house; a flight of fancy not very humorous in itself, and unfortunate in its result. The next day Mrs. Derinzy called on Dobbs senior, asked him for his bill, paid it, and removed the family custom to Sandwith of Bedminster.

Once seen, a woman not easily to be forgotten, from her physical appearance. About eight-and-forty years of age, tall and very strongly built, with broad shoulders and big wrists, knuckles both of wrists and hands very prominent, great frontal development, but low forehead, a penthouse for deep-set gray eyes. Light hair, thin, dull, and colourless; thin and colourless cheeks; thin lips, closing tightly over rows of small, gleaming dog's-teeth; big, square, massive jaw; cold, taciturn, and watchful, with eyes and ears of wonderful quickness, wits always ready, hands always active and strong. She came to Mrs. Derinzy on Dr. Wainwright's recommendation as "exactly the person to suit her," and she fulfilled her mission most exactly. What that mission was we shall learn; what her previous career had been we will state.

She was the only daughter of one Robert Hall, a verger

of Canterbury Cathedral, a clever, drunken dog, whose vergership was in constant peril, but who contrived to hoodwink the cathedral dignitaries as a general rule, and who on special occasions of outbreak invariably found some influential friend to plead his cause. He was a bookbinder as well as a verger, and in his trade showed not merely skilful manipulation, but rare taste, taste which was apparently inherited by his daughter Martha, who, at seventeen years of age, had produced some illuminated work which was pronounced by the *cognoscenti* in such matters to be very superior indeed. The cathedral dignitaries patronised Martha Hall's illuminations, and displayed them in their drawing-rooms at those pleasant evening gatherings, so decorous and so dull, and where the bearers of the sword mingle with the wearers of the gown, yawn away a couple of hours in looking over photograph-albums and listening to sonatas, and after a sandwich and a glass of sherry, lounge away to begin the night with devilled biscuits, billiards, and brandy-and-soda-water. The military, to whom these illuminations were thus introduced, thought it would be the "correct thing" to buy some of them; they would look "deuced well" in their rooms; so that the front parlour of the verger's little house in the precincts was speedily re-echoing to clanking sabres and jingling spurs, the owners of which were none the less ready to come again because the originator and vendor of the wares was a "doosid nice girl, don't you know? —not exactly pretty, but something doosid nice about her!" Martha Hall's handiwork was seen everywhere in barracks, and "many a holy text around she strewed," and had them hung up in subalterns' rooms between portraits of Mdlle. Joliejambe and the Blisworth Bruiser.

The sabres clanked so often and the spurs jingled so much in the verger's front parlour, that the neighbours—instigated, perhaps, less by their friendly feelings and their virtue than their jealousy—thought it time to speak to Robert Hall about it, and to ask him if he knew what he was doing, and what seed he was sowing, to be reaped in shame and disgrace. Wybrow, the mourning jeweller—who made very tasty little designs of yews and willows out of dead people's hair—declared that his shop

was never so full as his neighbour's; but then either the officers had no dead relations, or did not care for such melancholy *souvenirs*. Heelball, who had compiled a neat little handbook of the cathedral, and who furnished anyone who wanted them with "rubbings" of the crusaders' tombs, declared that the "milingtary" never patronised him; "perhaps," he added, "because I ain't young and pretty," therein decidedly speaking the truth, as he was sixty and deformed. Stothard, the tombstone sculptor, said nothing. He was supposed to be madly in love with Martha Hall, and it was noticed that when the young officers went clanking by his yard he took up his heaviest mallet and punished the stone under treatment fearfully. The hints and remonstrances had but little effect on Robert Hall. Not that he was careless about his daughter. "Happy-go-lucky" in other matters, he would have resented deeply any slight or insult offered to her. But he knew her better than anyone else, knew her passionless, calculating, ambitious nature, and had every confidence in it.

That confidence was not misplaced. Martha was polite to all who visited her as customers; talked and joked with them within bounds, displayed her handiwork, and sold it to the best advantage; taking care always to have ready money before she parted with it ("Can't think how she does it, 'pon my soul I can't!" was the cry in barracks. "Screwed two quid out of me for this d—d thing, down on the nail, by Jove! First thing I've had in the place that hasn't been chalked up, give you my word!") but never allowed any approach to undue familiarity. She was declared by her military customers to be "capital fun;" but it was perfectly understood amongst them that she "wouldn't stand any nonsense." So the shop was filled, and her trade throve, and her enemies and neighbours, however much they might hint and whisper in her detraction, had nothing tangible to narrate against her.

While Martha Hall's popularity was at its fullest height, there came to the depôt of the hussar regiment—to which he had just been gazetted as cornet—a young gentleman of prepossessing appearance, pleasant manners, good position, and apparently plenty of money. He was well received by his

brother officers, and after being introduced to the various delights which Canterbury affords, he was in due course taken to Martha Hall's shop, and presented to the young lady therein presiding. It was evident to his companions that the susceptibilities of their new comrade were very keenly aroused at the sight of Miss Hall; and it was no less palpable to Miss Hall herself. She laughingly told her father that night that she had made a fresh conquest; and her father grinned, advised her to set to work on some new texts, with which she could "stick" the new-comer, and repeated his never-failing assertion of thorough confidence in her.

The new-comer, whose name was Derinzy, quickly showed that he was not merely influenced by first impressions. He visited the shop constantly, he bought all the illuminations that Martha Hall could produce; and within a very short time he not merely fell violently in love with her, but told her so; and told her that if she would accept him, he would go to her father, and propose to marry her. To such a suggestion from any other of the score of officers in the habit of frequenting the shop, Martha Hall would have replied by a laugh, or, had it been pressed, by a declaration that she was flattered by the compliment, but that she knew the difference between their stations in life was an insuperable barrier, &c. But she said nothing of this kind to Alexis Derinzy. Why? Because she was in love with him. Perhaps her natural keenness of perception had enabled her to judge between the "spooniness" springing from a desire to bridge-over *ennui*, and to fill up the wearisome hours of a garrison life, which prompted the advances of her other admirers, and the unmistakable passion which this boy betrayed. Perhaps she admired his fair, picturesque face, and well-cut features, and slight form in contradistinction to the more robust and athletic proportions of the other youth then resident in barracks. Perhaps the rumours of the wealth of the Derinzys had reached those calm cloisters, and Martha might have thought that the fact that they were themselves in trade might induce them to overlook what to the scion of any noble house would be an undoubted *mésalliance*. No one knew, for Martha, reticent in everything, was scarcely likely

to gossip of her love-affairs; but the fact remained the same, and she loved him. She told him as much, at the same moment that she suggested that the consideration of the marriage question should be deferred for a few months, until he was of age. Mr. Derinzy agreed to this, as he would have agreed to anything his heart's charmer proposed, but stipulated that Martha should consider herself as engaged to him, and that the flirtations with "the other fellows" should be at once discontinued. Martha consented, and acted up both to the spirit and the letter of the agreement; but flirtation with Martha Hall had become such a habit with the officers quartered at Canterbury that it could not be given up all of a sudden; no matter how little the maiden might respond, the gallant youths still frequented the shop, and still paid their court in their usual clumsy but unmistakably marked manner. Alexis Derinzy, worried at this, and also feeling it uncommonly hard that he should not be able to boast of having secured the heart and the proximate chance of the hand of the most sought-after girl in Canterbury, mentioned his engagement, in the strictest confidence, to three or four of his brother officers, who, under the same seal, mentioned it to three or four more. Thus it happened that in a few days the story came to the ears of the adjutant of the depôt, who was a great friend of the Derinzy family, and at whose instigation it was that Alexis had been placed in the army.

Captain Branscombe was still a young man, but he had had ripe experience of life, and he knew that it would be as truly useless, under the circumstances, to reason with the love-stricken cornet, as to make application anywhere but to the highest domestic authorities. To these, therefore, he represented the state of affairs—the result of his representation being that Mr. Paul Derinzy, the elder brother of the cornet, came down to Canterbury by the coach the next day, and straightway sought an interview with the Dean. Then Robert Hall was summoned to the diaconal presence, out of which he came swearing strange oaths, and looking very flushed and fierce. Later in the afternoon he was waited upon at his own house in the precincts by Mr. Paul Derinzy, who had a very stormy

ten minutes with Martha, and then made his way to the barracks. Mr. Paul Derinzy remained in Canterbury for two days, during every hour of which, save those which he passed in bed, he was actively employed. The results of the mission did credit to his diplomatic talents. Alexis Derinzy sent in an application for sick leave, which being promptly granted, he quitted Canterbury without seeing Martha Hall, though he tried hard to do so; and did not rejoin until the regiment, safely arrived from India, was quartered at Hounslow. When Mr. Paul Derinzy was staying in Canterbury, it had been noticed by the neighbours that he had called once or twice on Stothard the stonemason, who has already been described as having been madly in love with Martha Hall; and Stothard had returned the visit at Paul's hotel. In the course of a few weeks after the "London gentleman's" departure, Stothard announced that he had inherited a legacy of a couple of hundred pounds from an old aunt. No one had ever heard any previous mention of this relative, nor did Stothard enter into any particulars whatever; he did not go to her funeral, and the only mourning he assumed was a crape band to his Sunday beaver. But there was no mistake about the two hundred pounds; that sum was paid in to his credit at the County Bank by their London agent, and he took the pass-book up with him when he went to Robert Hall's to propose for Martha. Folks said he was a fool for his pains; the kindest remarked that she would never stoop to him; the unkindest expressed their contempt for anybody as could take anybody else's leaving. But despite of both, Martha Hall accepted Stothard the stonemason, and they were married.

You must not think that all this little drama had been enacted without its due effect on one of the principal performers. You must not think that Martha Hall had lost Alexis Derinzy without fierce heartburning and deep regret, and intense hatred for those who robbed her of him. She knew that it was not the boy's own fault, she guessed what kind of pressure had been brought to bear upon him; but she thought he ought to have made a better fight of it. She had oved him, and if he had only been true to her and to their joint

cause, they might have been triumphant. In a few months he would have been of age, and then he could have gone up and seen his mother—he was always her favourite—and she would have persuaded his father, and all would have been straight. He always said he hated his brother Paul—how, then, had he suffered himself to be persuaded by him? Ah, other influences must have been brought to bear by Paul Derinzy! Paul Derinzy—how she hated him! She would register that name in her heart; and if ever she came across his path, let him look to himself. When Stothard came with his proposal, she made her acceptance of him conditional on his leaving Canterbury. The money which he had inherited, and the little sum which she had saved, would enable them to commence business afresh somewhere else—say, in London; but she must leave Canterbury. She could not stand the neighbours' looks and remarks, or, what was worse, their pity, any longer. She must go, she said; she was sick of the place. Robert Hall indorsed his daughter's desire; he was becoming more and more confirmed in his selfishness, and wanted to be allowed to drink himself to death without any ridiculous remonstrances. Stothard agreed—he would have agreed to anything then—and they were married; and Stothard bought a business in a London suburb, and for a time—during which time a daughter was born to them—they flourished.

For a time only; then Stothard took to drinking, and late hours; his hand lost its cunning; his customers dropped off one by one; the garnered money had long since been spent, and things looked bad. Stothard drank harder than before, had delirium tremens, and died. His widow could not go back to her old home, for her father had carried out his intention, and drank himself to death very soon after her marriage; and she was too proud to made her appearance among her old acquaintances under her adverse circumstances. As luck would have it, the doctor who had attended her husband, and who had been much struck by the manner in which she had nursed him in his delirium, was physician to a great hospital. He proposed to Mrs. Stothard that she should become a professional nurse, offering her his patronage and recommendation. She agreed,

and at once commenced practice in the hospital ; but she soon became famous among the physicians and surgeons, and they were anxious to secure her for their private patients, where her services would be well paid. In a few years she had gotten together quite a large connection, and she was in constant demand. The money which she received she applied to giving her daughter a good education. They met but seldom, Mrs. Stothard being so much engaged ; but she perceived in her daughter early signs of worldly wisdom, and a disposition to make use of her fellow-creatures, which gladdened her mother's soured spirit. She should be no weak fool, as her mother had been ; she should not be made a puppet to be set up and knocked down at a rich man's caprice ; she was sharp, she promised to be pretty, and she should be well-educated. Then, thoroughly warned as to what men were, she should be placed in some good commercial position, and left to see whether she could not contrive to make a rich and respectable marriage for herself.

One day when Mrs. Stothard was at St. Vitus's Hospital, where she was now regarded as a great personage, and where, when she paid an occasional visit, she was taken into the stewards' room, and regaled with the best port wine, Dr. Wainwright—who, though not attached to St. Vitus's, had a very great reputation in London, and was considered the leading man in his line—looked into the room. Seeing Mrs. Stothard, he entered, told her he had come expressly, learning she was there, and that he wanted to know if she would undertake a permanent situation. He entered into detail as to the case, mentioned the remuneration, which was very large, and stated that he knew no one who would be so satisfactory in the position ; and added : "Indeed, 'if we do not get Mrs. Stothard, I don't know what we shall do,' were the last words I uttered to Mrs. Derinzy."

Mrs. Stothard, albeit a calm and composed woman in general, literally jumped. A quarter of a century rolled up like a mist, and she saw herself selling illuminated scrolls in the little shop in the precincts of Canterbury, and the slim, handsome little cornet leaning over the counter, and devouring her with his bright black eyes.

"What name did you say, sir?" she asked when she recovered herself.

"Derinzy. Odd name, isn't it? De-rin-zy. The lady's husband is a retired military man, and the family consists of themselves and the young lady I was speaking of just now," said the doctor.

"Is she their daughter?" asked Mrs. Stothard.

"Oh no; they have no daughter, only a son, who lives in London. This young lady is their niece, daughter of—why, God bless my soul! you must have heard of him—Mr. Paul Derinzy, the merchant, the millionaire, who died some time ago. Ah! I forgot, though; millionaires—real ones, I mean—are not much in your line," added Dr. Wainwright, with a laugh. "You see plenty who fancy that——"

"Oh, and so Mr. Paul Derinzy is dead," interrupted Mrs. Stothard; "and this young lady is his daughter? I think, Dr. Wainwright, I must decline the situation."

Decline the situation! Dr. Wainwright had never heard of such a thing, never in the whole course of his professional experience. Decline the situation! Had Mrs. Stothard understood him correctly about the terms? Yes! And she talked of declining the situation after that! And for a permanency, too. And he had thought it would have been exactly the thing to suit her. Well, if she would not accept, she must not decline—at once, that was to say. She must think over it; she must indeed.

She did; and accepted it. Partly out of a desire for revenge. She had a long, long pondering over the past; and all the bitterness of bygone years had revived in her heart. She thought that something—luck she called it (she was little given to ascribe things to Providence)—had placed her enemies in her hands, and that she might use her power over the man who had given her up, and over the daughter of the man who had compelled him to do so. Partly for money. The salary proposed was very large, and her daughter's education was expensive, and the girl would soon have to be apprenticed to a house of business where a heavy premium must be paid. So she accepted. There was no doubt about her getting the place.

Dr. Wainwright's recommendation was all-sufficient, and Mrs. Derinzy was only too anxious to secure her services. Captain Derinzy had forgotten all about Stothard the stonemason, and the two hundred pounds which had been paid to him, even if he ever knew of the transaction. He did not recognise the name, and for the first few minutes after he saw her he did not recognise in the hard-featured, cold, impassive, middle-aged woman his bright boyish love of so many years before. When he did recognise her he started, and seemed as though he would have spoken; but she made him a slight sign, and he waited for an opportunity of their being alone. When that came, it was Mrs. Stothard who spoke. She told him there was no necessity for ever referring to the past, it was all forgotten by them both; they would never be brought in contact; she knew the position she held in his house, and she should fulfil it; it was better on all accounts that Mrs. Derinzy should be kept in ignorance of their former acquaintance—did he not think so? He did; and as he left her he grinned quietly.

"What the doose did she think?" he said to himself. "Gad! not likely that I should want to renew the acquaintance of an old horse-godmother like that. What a pretty gal she was, too! and how changed! by George, so that her own mother wouldn't know her! Wonder whether I'm as much changed as all that? Often look in the glass and wonder. Different in a man: he don't wear a cap, and that kind of thing; and my hair's lasted wonderful, considerin'. Martha Hall, eh? and those dam things—text things—that she used to paint in those colours—got some of 'em still, I think, somewhere in my old bullock-trunk; saw 'em the other day. Martha Hall!—Oh Lord!"

So Mrs. Stothard accepted office with the Derinzys, and was with them when, shortly afterwards, they gave up the house at Brompton where they had lived so long, and removed to Beachborough. The change affected Mrs. Stothard but very little; it mattered scarcely at all to her where she was; her time was very much employed in her duties, and what little leisure she found she passed in reading, or in writing to her daughter. She knew perfectly well that she was the subject of an immense

amount of curiosity in Beachborough village, and of talk at the village tea-tables; but it did not trouble her one whit. She knew that she was said to be a poor relation of the Derinzy family, and she did not discourage the idea. Thinking over the past, and what might have been, she found a kind of grim humour in the combination which suited her thoroughly. They might say what they liked, she thought, so long as her money was regularly paid, and so long as she found herself able to carry out the one scheme of her life—that of making a good marriage for her daughter Fanny.

Fanny then, under the name of Miss Stafford, was apprenticed to Madame Clarisse, the great court milliner, in London, and lived, when she was at home—and that was not often, poor child! for she slaved like a horse—in one little room in a house in South Molton Street, a lodging-house kept by an old sister-nurse of Mrs. Stothard's at St. Vitus's, a most respectable motherly woman, who would look after Fanny, and would at once let her mother know if there was "anything wrong." Not that there was any chance of that. Fanny Stafford acted up too strictly to her mother's teaching, and remembered too well the doctrine which had been inculcated in her girlhood, ever to make that mistake. She had been told that to marry a man considerably above her in pecuniary and social position was her mission in life; to that end she might use all her charms, all her arts; but that end must be marriage—nothing less. This she understood, and daily experience made her more and more impressed with the wisdom of her mother's determination. She had not much heart, she thought; she did not think she had any passion; and she knew that she had keen discrimination and accurate perception of character; so she thought she ought to succeed. Mrs. Stothard was acquainted with the peculiarities of her daughter's character, and thought so too.

At the very time when Captain Derinzy was lying stretched out on the headland overlooking Beachborough Bay, and making those cynical remarks on the place and its population, Mrs. Stothard was preparing to read a letter from her daughter Fanny. It had arrived in the morning; but Mrs. Stothard had been very busy all day, and it was not until the evening that she

found time to read it. Her occupation had confined her to the house, so that now, being for a few minutes free, she was glad to escape into the grounds. She chose that portion of the flower-garden which was farthest removed from the side of the house which she principally inhabited; and as she paced up and down the soft turf path between two rows of espaliers, she took the letter from her pocket and commenced to read it. It was written in a small delicate hand, and Mrs. Stothard had to hold it close to her eyes in the fading light. She read as follows:

"London, Sunday.

"MY DEAR MOTHER,—You will have been expecting to hear from me for some time, and, indeed, you ought to have had a letter, but the truth is I am so tired and sleepy when I get back here that I am glad to go straight to bed. We are just now in the height of the season, and are so busy that I scarcely ever have time to sit down. I told you, I think, that I was likely to be in the show-room this season. I was right. Madame asked me if I should like to be there, and when I said 'Yes,' she seemed pleased; and I have been there since April. I think I have made myself even more useful than she expected; for many of the customers know me now, and ask to see me in preference to Madame herself. I suppose she does not quite like that, but it is not my fault. I know I am neat and handy, and that there is no one in the house with so much education or so much manner, and these are both points which are noticed by customers. Nevertheless, I think I am winning my way into Madame's good graces; for when she goes out—and she is now out a great deal, at the French plays, at the Opera, and in private society; you have no notion what an immense amount of reception goes on amongst the French *coiffeurs* and *modistes* in London—she invariably leaves me to see the parcels sent off and the business of the day wound up. She has no forewoman, as I have told you, and I think I might aspire to that important post with reasonable hope of success if I wished it, but I don't.

"No, dear mother; it would give me no pleasure to have my name on as big a brass plate as Madame Clarisse's, on as

handsome a door in as eligible a situation. I should derive no satisfaction even if I could combine her connection with Madame Augustine's, her great rival. (Augustine's *clientèle* is richer than ours, I think, but we have by far the *best* people.) I long sometimes, when I see a wretched old creature nodding under a wreath when she ought to be concealing her bald pate or her gray hairs under an honest mob-cap, or when I am helping a stout middle-aged matron to struggle into a gown of a style and pattern suitable for her youngest daughter, to throw all my chances of success in business to the winds, and tell the people then under my hands plainly and openly what I think of them. I cannot stand—or rather I could not, were it for a permanence; I can well enough for a time—this wretched ko-tooing existence, this perpetual grinning and curtsying and false-compliment paying, this utter abnegation of one's own opinion, one's own feelings, one's own self! You must not be surprised at these expressions, dear mother, recollecting how you have had me brought up, and how you yourself have always inculcated in me a strong desire to better my position, and by a good marriage to raise myself into a class superior to this.

"Mother, I think I'm going to do it. I think that I have a chance of freeing myself from this servitude, which is galling to me, and of winning a station in life such as you yourself would be proud to see me holding. You remember how you used to talk to me about this when I was much younger, and how I used then to laugh at your earnestness, and tell you your hopes and aspirations were but dreams? I declare now I think there is some chance of their being realised.

"Now you are all impatience, and dying to know all I have to tell! I can see you—I suppose you are not much changed since we last parted; I often wonder—I can see you skimming over the paper in your eager anxiety to get at the details. I will not keep you in suspense, dear mother—here they are! A month ago, I was returning to Mrs. Gillott's late at night. We had been hard at work until nearly twelve o'clock, getting out a large wedding order, and Madame thought it important enough to superintend the packing and sending out of the

various things. I had remained till the last, and the church-clock opposite struck twelve as the door closed behind me. The streets were almost deserted; but I had not gone far before I perceived that a man was following me. I could not make out what kind of a man he was, as he persistently kept in the shade, walking at first on the opposite side of the way, then crossing behind me, but ever constantly following. I knew this from the sound of his footsteps, which echoed in the stillness of the night. When I crossed Bond Street he came abreast of me, and then I saw that he was a common man in his working dress. I was frightened then, I confess. You don't know what they are sometimes, mother, these working men. I would sooner meet any gentleman, however loose, any what they call 'gent,' than some of those! It isn't their conduct, it's what they say! They seem to delight in using the most awful language, the foulest terms, to unprotected girls; merely, apparently, for the sake of insulting them. This man was a bad specimen of his class. There was no one near, and he stepped up to my side after we had crossed Bond Street, and said to me things—I don't know what, for I hurried on without looking towards him. I knew well enough what he said next, he took care that there should be no mistake about that, for he prefaced his remark with a short laugh of scorn and defiance, and then —he made his speech. I was not surprised; no girl compelled to walk alone in London, and especially at night, could be surprised at anything that might be said to her; but I was disgusted and frightened, and tried to run. The man ran by my side—I saw then that he was drunk—and tried to catch hold of me. I was in a dreadful fright, and I suppose I looked so, for a gentleman who was coming out of the hotel at the corner of South Molton Street stepped hurriedly out, and said, 'I beg your pardon—is this person annoying you?' Before I could reply, the man said something—too horrible—about me and himself, and the next moment he was lying in the road; the gentleman had taken him by the collar and flung him there. He got up, and rushed at the gentleman; but by this time a policeman who had seen it all crossed the street, and made

him go away. Then the gentleman took off his hat, and begged leave to see me to my door. I allowed him to do so—it was foolish, I know, mother, but I was all unnerved, and scarcely knew what I did; and when we arrived at Mrs. Gillott's I thanked him, and bade him good-night. He took off his hat again, and left me at once.

"He found out who I was—how, I don't know—for next day I had a polite note, hoping I had quite recovered from my alarm, expressed in the most gentlemanly manner, and signed 'Paul Douglas.' I have met him several times since, always in the street, and have walked and talked with him. He is always most polite and respectful, but of course professes himself to be madly in love. Yesterday, for the first time, I found out who he is. He has an appointment in a Government office, the 'Stannaries' they call it, and his family live somewhere in the West of England. They are evidently well off, and he, Paul, is what they call a 'swell.' Very good-looking, slight and dark, about five-and-twenty, and always beautifully dressed.

"You don't fear me, mother? You have sufficient reliance on me to know that I would never discredit your training. You will want to know whether I am in love with this young man. I think I am—so far. And you need not be afraid. He vows—everything, of course; but he is too much of a gentleman, in the first place, to offer to insult me, and in the second—well, to speak plainly, he knows it would be of no use. Is this the chance that you taught me to look for? I think it is. But we shall soon know. Meanwhile believe in the thorough discretion of your loving daughter

FANNY."

Up and down the soft turf path paced Mrs. Stothard in the glorious summer evening, with the open letter in her hand, deep in cogitation. Her head was bent upon her breast, and occasionally raised as she referred to the paper. Suddenly a light gleamed in her face; she hurriedly re-perused the letter, folding it so as only to make herself thorough mistress of a

certain portion of its contents, and then she smiled a hard grim smile, and said to herself in a hard bitter voice:

"Of course, of course! What an idiot I was not to see it at once! The mention of the Stannaries Office might have convinced me, if all my senses had not been blunted by my wretched work in this wretched place! Douglas, indeed! Paul Douglas is Paul Derinzy; slight, dark, handsome—none but he! Family in the West of England, too—no doubt of it! And in love with my Fan! Oh, my dear friends, I'll spoil your game yet! I'm so blind. Quiet and seclusion for dear Annette's health; no other reason, oh no! Not to keep her out of the way of fortune-hunters, and save her up for our son, oh dear no! That shall never be! Our son shall marry my Fan! What is it? 'The sins of the fathers shall be visited on the children.' I never believed much in that sort of thing; but in this instance it really looks as though there were something in it."

CHAPTER VII.

FRIENDS IN COUNCIL.

THOSE persons to whom London is a home—a place to be lived in all the year round, save on the occasion of the two months' holiday, when one rushes off to the North, or to the sea, or to the Continent, returning with a renewed stock of health, and a pleasurable sense of having enjoyed yourself, but with a still more pleasurable sense of being back again in town—are very much amused at a notion prevalent amongst many worthy people who arrive at their own or at a hired house in the month of March, stay there till the end of the month of June, and go away fancying that they know London. Know London!

A lifetime's earnest devotion does not suffice for that study, and those people who talk thus have not even the merest smattering of its topography. Their London used to be bounded on the west by the Knightsbridge Barracks—even now they acknowledge nothing beyond Princes Terrace. On the south-west they have penetrated as far as Onslow Square; the territory beyond that might be full of tiger-lairs and hiding-places for dragons, for all they know about it. Of the suburbs, beyond such knowledge as they derive from an occasional visit to the Star and Garter at Richmond, they know absolutely nothing. They do not know, and it would not make the smallest difference to them if they did, that if, instead of cantering up and down that ghastly, treeless, sun-scorched mile of gravel, the Row, they chose to turn their horses' heads north-westward, they could find shade in the green Willesden lanes and air on the breezy Hendon heights. They do not know that within a very short distance of Hyde Park there are shady lanes half hidden in greenery, dotted here and there with quaint old-fashioned houses standing in the midst of large grounds—some with gardens sloping away towards the river; others with enormous trees overhanging them, blotting out all view or vista; and others again with such an expanse of what the auctioneers are pleased to term "park-like grounds" visible from their windows, that you would have no idea of the immediate proximity of London, save for the never-varying presence of the smoke-wreath hanging over the horizon, and the never-ceasing, save on Sundays, dull rumble of distant traffic, which grinds on the ear like the monotonous surging of the waves upon the shore.

In one of these metropolitan suburbs, no matter which, stood and stands the house which at the period of our story was George Wainwright's home, the residence of his father, Dr. Wainwright. It was a big, long, rambling, red-faced old house, with an enormous number of rooms, some large and some small, standing in the midst of a large garden. Tradition said that it had been a favourite residence of Cromwell's; but it was generally believed, and the belief was not ill-founded, that it had

been given by the Lord Protector to the husband of his favourite daughter, and that he himself had frequently been in the habit of staying there. At the end of the first quarter of the present century it had a very different occupant from the grim old Ironsides leader, being rented by the Countess Della Crusca, the wittiest, the most beautiful, the most extravagant, the most fascinating woman of her day. Old Knaves of Clubs still *raffolent* about the Della Crusca, her eyes and her poems, her bust and her repartees. She had a husband?—Oh yes! the Count Della Crusca, ex-officer of Bersaglieri and one of the first naturalists of his day, corresponding member of all the principal European societies, and perfectly devoted to his favourite pursuit; so devoted, that he was invariably away in some distant foreign country, engaged in hunting for specimens. The Countess was an Englishwoman, daughter of Captain Ramus, half-pay, educated at a convent in Paris, under the guidance of her maternal aunt, Miss Coghlan, of Letterkenney in Ireland. Immediately on issuing from the convent she eloped with Count Della Crusca, whose acquaintance she had made in a casual manner in the *coupé* of one of the diligences belonging to Messrs. Lafitte, Caillard et Cie. A very short time served to prove to them that they had no tastes in common. Madame la Comtesse did not care for natural history, which the Count loved, and she did care for England, which the Count loathed. So he went his way, in pursuit of specimens, and she went hers to England. She arrived in London, and Marston Moor House being to let, she took it.

Some of us are yet alive who recollect the little saccharine poems, the plaintive little sonnets, the—well, yes, to speak the truth—the washy three-volume novels which were composed in that sturdy old building and dated thence. Sturdy outside, but lovely within. Such furniture: white satin and gold, black satin and red trimming; such pictures, and statues, and busts; such looking-glasses let into the walls at every conceivable place; such hanging baskets and ormolu clocks, and Dresden and Sèvres china; such Chinese fans, and Indian screens, and Turkish yataghans and Malay creeses; such books—at least,

such bindings; such a satinwood desk, at which the Countess penned her inspirations; such a solemn-sounding library clock, which had belonged to Marie Antoinette; such lion-skins and leopard-skins for rugs; such despatch-boxes with the Della Cruscan coronet and cipher; such waste-paper baskets always littered with proof-sheets! The garden! never was anything seen like that! It was not much more than half an acre, but Smiff, the great landscape gardener, made it look more like a square mile. Delightfully rustic and English here, quaintly Dutch there, Italian terraced a little lower down, small avenue, vista broken by the fountain; might be a thousand miles away from London, so everyone said. Everyone said so, because everyone came there. Who was everyone? Well, the Grand-Duke of Schweinerei was someone, at all events. Ex-Grand-Duke, I should have said, recollecting that some years before, the people of Schweinerei, although by no means a strait-laced people, grew so disgusted at the "goings-on" of their reigning potentate, that they rose in revolt, and incontinently kicked him out. Then he came to England, where he has remained ever since, dwelling in a big house, and occupying his spare time with fighting newspapers for libelling him in a very blackguard and un-English manner. His highness is an elderly, short, fat man, with admirably-fitting wig and whiskers of the Tyrian purple. He has dull bleary eyes, pendulous cheeks, and a great fat double chin. He is covered all over with diamonds: his studs are diamonds; he wears a butterfly diamond brooch on the knot of his white cravat; his waistcoat-buttons are diamonds; his sleeve-links are diamonds; and he resembles the old woman of Banbury Cross in having (diamond) rings on his fingers, and probably, for all the historian knows to the contrary, on his toes.

Who else came there? A tall, thin, dark man, with a long face like a sheep's head, a full dull eye, a long nose, a very long upper lip, and a retreating chin. Prince Bernadotte of the Lipari Isles, also an exile, but one who has since been recalled to his kingdom. Nobody thought much of Prince Bernadotte in those days. He lived in cheap chambers in London, and

used to play billiards with *coiffeurs* and *agents de change* and *commis voyageurs* from the hotels in Leicester Square; and who went into a very little English society, where he always sat silent and reserved, and where they thought very little of him. He must have been marvellously misunderstood then, or must have grown into quite a different kind of man when he sat smoking his cigar with his feet on the fender in the Elysée, and to all inquiries made but the one reply, "*Qu'on exécute mes ordres!*"—those "ordres" being fulfilled in the massacre of the Boulevards.

Who else? *Savans*, philosophers, barristers, poets, newspaper-writers, novelists, caricaturists, eminent physicians and surgeons, fiddlers, foreigners, anybody who had done anything which had given him the merest temporary notoriety was welcome, so long as he came at the time. And they never failed to do that. The society was so delightful, the welcome was so warm, the eating and drinking were so good, that there was never any chance of an invitation to Marston Moor House being refused. Thither came Fermez, the opera *impresario*, driving down a couple of lords in his phaeton; and Tom Gilks, the scene-painter of Covent Garden, who arrived per omnibus; and Whiston, who had just written that tremendous pamphlet on the religious controversy of the day; and Rupert Robinson, who had sat up all the previous night to finish his burlesque, and who was so enchanted with the personal appearance of the Grand-Duke of Schweinerei, that he wanted to carry him off bodily—rings, diamonds, wig, whiskers, and all—to Madame Tussaud's Exhibition. Dinners and balls, conversazioni and fêtes—with the garden illuminated with Italian lamps, and supper served in extemporised pavilions—two royal dukes, in addition to standard celebrities, and foreign princes in town for the season—without end.

> Vain transitory splendour! could not all
> Retain the tott'ring mansion from its fall?

Apparently not. One morning the servants at Marston Moor

House got up, to find their mistress had risen before them, or rather had not been to bed at all, having decamped during the night with the plate and all the portable valuables, and left an enormous army of creditors behind her. There was weeping and wailing round the neighbourhood for months; but tears and outcries did not pay the defrauded tradespeople, and they never had any money. Nobody ever knew who received the money realised by the sale of the furniture, &c., though that ought to have been something considerable, for there never was a sale so tremendously attended, or at which things fetched such high prices. All the ladies of high rank who combined frightful stupidity with rigid virtue, and who would as soon have thought of walking into Tophet as of crossing Madame Della Crusca's threshold, rushed to Marston Moor House so soon as its proprietress had fled, and bought eagerly at the sale. The large looking-glass which formed the back of the alcove in which Madame Della Crusca's bed was placed now figures in the boudoir, or, as it is generally called, the work-room, of the Countess of Textborough, and is scarcely so happy in its reflections as in former days. The satinwood desk fell to the nod of Mrs. Quisby, who used to follow the Queen's hounds in a deep-pink jacket and a short skirt, and who now holds forth on Sunday afternoons at the infant schools in Bodger's Buildings, Mayfair, and is especially hard on the Scarlet Woman. Many of the old *habitués* attended, and bought well-remembered scraps for *souvenirs*. Finally everything, down to the kitchen pots and pans, the stable buckets and the gardeners' implements, were cleared off, and a big painted board frowned in the great courtyard, informing the British public that that eligible mansion was to let.

Not for long did that black-and-white board blossom in that flinty soil. Within three weeks of the sale a rumour ran through London that an *al-fresco* place of entertainment on a magnificent scale was about to be opened on what had been the Della-Cruscan property, and that Wuff, the great Wuff, the most enterprising man of his day, was at the back of it. Straightway the board was pulled down, and an army of painters, and decorators, and plumbers, and builders, and Irish

gentlemen in flannel jackets, and Italian gentlemen in slouch wideawakes and paint-stained gaberdines, took possession of the place. Big rooms were converted into supper and dining-rooms, and small rooms into *cabinets particuliers*; a row of supper-boxes on the old Vauxhall pattern sprang up in the grounds, which, moreover, were tastefully planted with gas-lamps, with plaster-of-Paris statues, with two or three sham fountains, and with grottos made of slag and shiny-faced bricks. Then, on an Easter Monday, the place was opened with a ballet, with dancing on the circular platform, with Signor Simioso's performing monkeys, and with a grand display of fireworks. Very good, all this; but somehow it didn't draw. The great Wuff did all he could; sent an enormous power of legs into the ballet; engaged the most excruciatingly funny comic singers, put silver rosettes into the button-holes and silver-gilt wands into the hands of all the masters of the ceremonies on the circular platform; and had Guffino il Diavolo flying from the top of the pasteboard Leaning Tower of Pisa into the canvas Lake of Geneva, down a wire, with a squib in his cap, and one in each of his heels—and yet the public would not come. The great Wuff tried it for two seasons, and then gave it up in despair.

Up went the black-and-white board again; to be taken down at the bidding of Mrs. Trimmer, who, having a very good boarding-school for young ladies at Highgate, thought she might increase her connection by establishing herself in a more eligible neighbourhood. The board had been up so long, that the proprietor of the house was willing, not merely to take a reduced rent, but to pull up the gas-lamps, and pull down the supper-boxes, and restore the garden, not indeed to its original state of beauty, but to decency and order. The rooms were repapered (it must be owned that Wuff's taste in decoration had been loud), and the name of the house changed from Marston Moor to Cornelia. Then Mrs. Trimmer took possession, and brought her young friends with her, and they throve and multiplied exceedingly; and all went well until Mrs. Trimmer died, and there was no one to carry on the business; and the board went up, and remained up longer than ever.

No one knew exactly when or how the house was taken again. The proprietor, hoping to get another school-keeper for a tenant, the house being too large for ordinary domestic purposes, had bought Mrs. Trimmer's furniture—the iron bedsteads and school fittings—for a song, and had placed an old woman in charge. One day this old woman put her luggage, consisting of a blue bundle, and herself into a cab, and went away. A few carpenters had arrived from town in the morning, and had occupied themselves in fitting iron bars to the interior of some of the windows. During the greater portion of that night carriages were heard rolling up the lane in which the back entrance to the house was situated, and the next day smoke was seen issuing from the chimneys; a big brass plate with the name of "Dr. Bulph" was screwed on to the iron gates of the carriage-drive, and two or three strong-built men were noticed going in and out of the premises. Gradually it became known that Dr. Bulph was a physician celebrated for his treatment of the insane, a "mad-doctor," as the neighbours called him; and women and children used to skurry past the old red garden-walls as though they thought the inmates were climbing over to get at them. But the house was so thoroughly well-conducted, so quietly and with such excellent discipline, that people soon thought nothing of it, any more than of any other of the big mansions in the neighbourhood; and when Dr. Bulph retired, and Dr. Wainwright succeeded him, the door-plate had actually been changed for some days before the neighbours noticed it.

Dr. Wainwright made many changes in the establishment. He was a man of great fame for several specialities, and was constantly being called away to patients in the country. He considerably enlarged the old house, and brought to it a better and wealthier class of patients, who were attended, under his supervision, by two resident surgeons. Dr. Wainwright did not live in the house. In addition to his practice he worked very hard with his pen, contributing largely to the principal medical scientific reviews and journals, and corresponding with many continental *savans*. For all this work he required solitude and silence; and, as he was a widower, he was able to enjoy both in a set of chambers in the Albany, where he could go in and

out as he liked, and where no unwelcome visitor could get at him. He had consulting-rooms in Grosvenor Square; and when in town, was to be found there between ten and one; but after those hours it was impossible to know where to catch him.

But George Wainwright lived at the old house, or rather in an outbuilding in the grounds, sole remainder of Mr. Wuff's erections; which had been converted to his use, and which yielded him a large, high-roofed, roomy studio, and a capital bedroom, both on the ground floor. The studio was no misnomer for the living-room; for, in addition to his Civil-Service work, George followed art with deep and earnest devotion, and was known and recognised as one of the best amateurs of the day. Men whose names stood very high in the art-world were his friends; and on winter nights the studio would be filled with members of that pleasant Bohemian society, discussing their craft and its members and such cognate subjects. George was a great reader also, and had a goodly store of books littering the tables or ranged on common shelves, disputing possession of the walls with choice bits of his friends' painting or half-finished attempts of his own. In the middle of the room stood a quaintly-carved old black-oak desk, ink-blotted and penknife-hacked, with some pages of manuscript and some slips of proof lying on it—for George, who had been educated in Germany, was in the habit of contributing essays on abstruse questions of German philosophy and metaphysics to a monthly review of very portentous weight—and in the corner was a cabinet piano, covered with loose leaves of music, scraps from oratorios, *studenten-lieder*, bits of Bach and Glück, glees of Purcell and Arne, and even ballads by Claribel. Some of George's painter friends had formed themselves into a singing-club and sang very sweetly; and the greatest treat that could be offered to the inmates of the house was these fellows' musical performances. The young swells of the Stannaries Office wondered why George Wainwright was never seen at casino, singing and supper-houses, or other of those resorts which they specially affected. They looked upon him as somewhat of a fogey, and could not understand what a bright, genial, jolly fellow like Paul Derinzy could see to like in him. He was kind and good-natured and

all that, they owned, as indeed they had often proved by loans of "sovs" and "fivers," when the end of the quarter had left them dry; but he was an uncomfortable sort of chap, they said, and was always by himself.

He was by himself the evening of the day after that on which he had seen Paul Derinzy walking with Daisy in Kensington Gardens. He had had a light dinner at his club, and thence walked straight away home, where, on his arrival at his den, he had lit a big pipe and thrown himself into an easy-chair, and sat watching the blue smoke curling above his head, and pondering over the present and the future of his friend. George Wainwright had a stronger feeling than mere liking for Paul; there was a touch of romance in the regard which the good-looking, bright, easy-going young man had aroused in his steady, sober, practical senior. George was too much a man of the world to thrill with horror because he had seen his friend in the company of a pretty girl, and come across what was evidently a lovers' meeting. But his knowledge of Paul's character was large and well-founded; in the mere glance which he had got of the pair as they stood together in the act of saying adieu, he had caught an expression in his friend's face which intuitively led him to feel that the woman who could call up such a look of intense earnest devotion was no mere passing light-o'-love; and as George thought over the scene, and reproduced it, time after time, from the storehouse of his memory, he puffed fiercer blasts from his pipe, and shook his head in an unsettled, not to say desponding manner.

While he was thus occupied he heard steps on the gravel-walk outside, then a tap at the door. Opening it, Paul Derinzy stood before him.

"Just the man I was thinking about, and come exactly in the nick of time! *Alma quies optata, veni!* Not that you can be called *alma quies*, you restless bird of the night! What's the matter? what are you making signs about?" asked George.

"That idiot, Billy Dunlop, is with me," replied Paul, grinning; "he is doing some of his pantomime nonsense outside;" and, indeed, George Wainwright, peering out in the darkness, could make out a stout figure approaching with cautious gestures,

which, when it emerged into the lamplight, proved to be Mr. Dunlop.

"Hallo, Billy! what are you at? Come in, man; light a pipe, and be happy."

But Mr. Dunlop, true to his character of comic man, did not enter the room quietly, but came in with a little rush, and then, his knees knocking together in simulated abject terror, asked:

"Am I safe? Can none of them get at me?"

"None of whom?"

"None of the patients. I was in such a fright coming up that garden, I could scarcely speak. I thought I saw eyes behind every laurestinus; and—I suppose the staff of keepers is adequate, in case any of 'em *should* prove rampagious?"

"Oh yes, it's all right. Have you never been here before?"

"Never, sir; and I don't think, provided I get safe away this time, that I'm ever likely to come again."

"You're complimentary; but now you are here, sit down and have a drink. Spirits there in that stand, soda-water here in the window-seat, ice in that refrigerator by the door. Or stay, let me make you the new Yankee drink that has just come up—a cobbler. There are plenty of straws somewhere about."

"I should think so," said Billy, in a stage-whisper to Paul. "He gets 'em out of the patients' heads. Lunatics always stick straws in their heads, vide the drama *passim*. I say, Wainwright, while you're mixing the grog, may I run out and have a look at the night-watch?"

"The what?" asked George, raising his head.

"The night-watch, you know;" and Mr. Dunlop sat down at the piano, squared his elbows, contorted his face, and with much ludicrous exaggeration burst forth:

"Hush-sh-sh-sh! 'tis the NIGHT-WATCH!! he gy-ards my lonely cell!

Now don't you say that he doesn't, you know, because I've Mr. Henry Russell's authority that he does. So produce your night-watch!"

"Don't make such a row, Billy!" cried Paul; "there's no night-watch, or anything else of the sort."

"What! do you mean to say that I did not see her dancing in the hall? that I am not cold, bitter cold? that his glimmering lamp no more I see? and that no, no, by hav-vens, I am not ma-a-ad?" With these words, uttered in the wildest tones, Mr. Dunlop cast himself at full length on the sofa, whence arising immediately with a placid countenance, he said: "Gentlemen, if you wish thus to uproot and destroy the tenderest associations of childhood, I shall be happy, when I have finished my drink, to wish you a good-evening, and return home."

"I can't think what the deuce you came for," said Paul, with a smile. "He looked in at the club where I was dining, hoping to meet you, and where I heard you had been and gone, and asked me whether I wasn't going to evening service. When I told him 'yes,' he said he would come with me; and all the way along he has done nothing but growl at the pace I was walking, and the length of the way."

"Don't mind me, Mr. Wainwright," said Billy, politely; "pray let the gentleman go on. I am not the Stannaries Stag, sir, and I never laid claim to the title; consequently it's no degradation to me to avow that I can't keep on heeling and toeing it at the rate of seven miles an hour for long. As it happens, I have a friend in the neighbourhood, a fisherman, who has managed to combine a snack-bend with a Kirby hook in a manner which he assures me—pardon me, dear sirs, those imbecile grins remind me that I am speaking to men who don't know a stone-fly from a gentle; that I have been throwing my —I needn't finish the sentence. I have finished the drink. Mr. Wainwright, have the goodness to see me off the premises, and, in the words of the distraught Ophelia—to whom, by-the-way, I daresay your talented father would have been called in, had he happened to live in Denmark at the time—'let out the maid who'——good-night!"

When George Wainwright returned, alone, he found Paul, who had lighted a cigar, walking up and down the room, his hands plunged in his pockets, his chin down upon his chest. George went up to him, and putting his hand affectionately on his shoulder, said:

"What brought you down here to-night, young 'un? The

last rats must have deserted the sinking ship of Fashion and Season when you clear out of it to come down to Diogenes in his tub. Not but that I'm delighted to see you ; all I want to know is why ?"

"I was nervous and restless, George ; a little tired of fools and frippery, and—and myself. I wanted you to blow a little of the ozone of common sense into me, you know !"

"Oh yes, I know," said George Wainwright ; but he uttered the words in such deep solemn tones that Paul turned upon him suddenly, saying :

"You know ? Well, what do you know ?"

"I know why you could not play tennis, or come to the Oval, or walk to Hendon with me yesterday afternoon."

"The deuce you do ! And why ?"

"For a very sufficient reason to a young fellow of five-and-twenty !" said George, with a rather melancholy grin. "Look here, Paul ; I don't think you'll imagine I'm a spy, or a meddling, impertinent busybody, and I'm sure you'll believe it was by the merest accident that I was crossing Kensington Gardens last evening, and there saw a friend of mine in deep conversation with a very handsome young lady."

"The deuce you did !" cried Paul, turning very red. "What then ?"

"Ah !" said George, filling his pipe, "that's exactly the point—what then ?"

"What a provoking old beggar you are ! Why do you echo me ? Why don't you go on ?"

"It's for you to go on, my boy ! What are your relations—or what are they to be—with this handsome girl ?"

"She is handsome, is she not ?"

"Beautiful !"

"'Gad ! she must be to strike fire out of an old flint like you, George !" cried Paul. "What are my relations with her ? Strictly proper, I give you my word."

"And you intend to marry her ?"

"How the man jumps at an idea ! Well, no ; I don't know at all that I intend that."

"Not the—the other thing, Paul ? No ; you're, to say the

least of it, too much of a gentleman. You don't intend that?"

"I don't intend anything, I tell you. Can't a man talk to a pretty girl without 'intention'?"

"I don't know, Paul. I'm quite incompetent to pronounce any opinion on such matters; only—only see here: I look on you as on a younger brother, and, prompted by my regard for you, I may say many things which you may dislike."

"Well, say away, old George; you won't offend me."

"Well, then, if this is a good honest girl, and you don't intend to marry her, you ought not to be meeting her, and walking with her, and leading her to believe that she will attain to a position through you which she never would otherwise; and if she isn't an honest girl you ought never to have spoken to her."

Paul Derinzy laughed, the quiet easy chuckle of a man of the world, as he replied to his simple senior:

"She *is* a good, honest girl, no doubt of that. But suppose the question of marriage had never risen between us, and she still liked to meet me and to walk with me, what then? In the gravel paths of Kensington Gardens, Pamela herself might have strolled with Captain Lovelace himself without fear. Why should not I with—with this young lady?"

"Because, though you don't know it, you're deceiving yourself and deceiving her; because the whole thing is incongruous and won't fit, however you may try to make it do so; because it's wrong, however much you may slur it over. Look here, Paul; suppose, just for the sake of argument, that you wanted to marry this girl—you're as weak as water, and there's no accounting for what you might wish—you know your people would oppose it in the very strongest way, and——"

"Oh, if I chose it, my 'people,' as you call them, must have it, or leave it alone, which would be quite immaterial to me."

"Yes, yes, no doubt; but still——"

"Look here, George; let's bring this question to a practical issue. I'm ten times more a man of the world than you, though you are an old fogey, and clever and sensible and all that. What you are aiming it is that I must give up this girl. Well, then, shortly, I won't!"

"And why won't you?"

"For a reason you can't understand, you old mole, burrowed down here under your paintings, and your fugues, and your dreary old German philosophers—because I love her; because I think of her from morning till night, and from night till morning again; because her bright face and her gay creamy skin come between me and those beastly old minutes and memoranda that we have to write at the shop; and when I'm lying awake in Hanover Street, or even sitting surrounded by a lot of gabbling idiots in the smoking-room of the club, I can see her gray eyes looking at me, and——"

"Oh Lord!" said George Wainwright, with a piteous smile; "I had no idea I'd let myself in for this!"

"You have, my dear old George, and for a lot more at a future time. Just now I came out to you because I was horribly restless, and Billy fastened himself on to me at the club, and I could not shake him off. But I want to talk to you about it seriously, George—seriously, you understand!"

"Whenever you like, Paul; but I expect you'll only get one scrap of advice out of me, repeated, as I fear, *ad nauseam*."

"And that is?"

"Give her up! give her up! give her up! Cato's powers of iteration in the *delenda est Carthago* business will prove weak as compared to mine in this."

"You'll find me stubborn, George."

"Buffon gives stubbornness as a characteristic of your class, Paul. Good-night, old man."

"Good-night, God bless you! To-morrow as per usual, I suppose?" and he was gone.

Alone once more, George Wainwright threw himself again into the easy-chair and renewed his pipe; but he shook his head more than ever, and when he did speak, it was only to mutter to himself: "Worse than I thought! Don't see the way out of that. Must look into this, and take care that Paul does not make a fool of himself."

When the clock struck midnight he rose, yawned, stretched, and seemed more than half inclined to turn towards his cosy

bedroom, which opened from the studio; but he shook himself together, and saying, "Poor dear, she would not sleep if I did not say good-night to her, I suppose!" lit a lamp, and took his way across the garden to the house.

CHAPTER VIII.

CORRIDOR NO. 4.

ACROSS the garden, and through an iron gate which he unlocked, and which itself formed part of a railing shutting off one wing of the house from the rest and from the grounds, George Wainwright walked; then up a short flight of steps, topped by a heavy door, which he also unlocked with a master key which he took from his pocket, and which closed behind him with a heavy clang; through a short stone passage, in a room leading off which, immediately inside the door—a bright, snug, cheerful little room, with a handful of fire alight in the grate, and the gas burning brightly over the mantelpiece, and a tea-tray and appurtenances brightly shining on the table—was a young woman—handsome, black-eyed, and rosy-cheeked, tall, strongly built, and neatly dressed in a close-fitting dark-gray gown—who started up at the sound of the approaching footsteps, and presented herself at the door.

"You on duty, Miss Marshall?" said George, with a smile and a bow.

"Yes, Mr. George, it's my night-turn again; comes round quicker than one thinks for, or than one hopes for, indeed! Going to see your sweetheart as usual, Mr. George?"

"Yes; I don't often miss; never, indeed, when I'm at home."

"Ah, if all other men were as thoughtful and as kind and as true to their sweethearts as you are to yours, there would be less

need for these sort of houses in the world, Mr. George," said the young woman, with a somewhat scornful toss of her head.

"Come, come, Miss Marshall," cried George, laughingly, "you've no occasion to talk in that manner, I'm sure. Besides, I might retort, and say that if all women were as kind and as loving and as pleased to see their sweethearts as mine is to see me, if they remained true to them for as many years as mine has remained true to me, if they were as patient and as quiet—yes, and I think as silent—as mine is, they would have a greater chance of retaining men's affections."

"Poor dear Madame!" said Miss Marshall. "Ah, you don't see many like her!"

"I never saw one," said George. "But she will be keeping awake on the chance of my coming to say good-night to her."

And with another smile and bow he passed on.

First down another and a longer stone passage, the doors leading from either side of which were wide open, showing bath-rooms, kitchens, and other domestic penetralia; then up a flight of stairs to a landing covered with cocoa-nut matting, and giving on to a long corridor, on the stone-coloured wall of which was painted in large black letters, "Corridor No. 4." Closed doors here—doors of dormitories, where the inmates were shut in for the night: some tossing on their dream-haunted pillows; some haply—God knows—enjoying a mental rest as soft and sweet as the slumber which enchained them, borne away to the bygone days, when they thought and felt and knew, ere the brain was distraught, and the memory snapped, and the mind either warped or void. All was perfectly quiet as George passed along, stopping at length before a door which was closed but not locked, and at which he tapped lightly. Lightly, but with a sound which was quickly heard, for a soft voice cried immediately "*Entrez!*" and he opened the door, and went in.

It was a pretty little room, considerably too lofty for its breadth—a long narrow slip of a place, which some people with pleasant development of mortuary tendencies might have rendered unpleasantly like a grave. But it was tricked out with a pretty wall-paper, all rosebuds and green leaves; some good photographs of foreign scenery were framed on the walls; a

wooden Swiss peasant with a clock-face let into the centre of his waistcoat, and its works ticking and running and whirring away in the centre of his anatomy, stood on the mantelpiece; the fireplace was filled up with bright-gilded shavings; and the bed, instead of being the mere ordinary iron stump bedstead to be found in other dormitories of the house, was gay with white hangings, and blue bows tastefully disposed here and there.

On it lay a woman, who had risen on her elbow at George's knock, and who remained in the same attitude, awaiting his approach. A woman of small stature evidently, and delicately made, with small well-cut features and small bones. Her hair, as snow-white as the cap under which it was looped up, contrasted oddly with the deep ruddy bronze of her complexion; such bronze as, travelling south, you first begin to notice among the Lyonnaises, and afterwards find so common along the shores of the Mediterranean. But Time, though he had changed the colour of her locks—and to be so very white now, they must necessarily have been raven black before—had failed in dimming the lustre of her marvellous eyes; they remained large, and dark, and appealing, as they must have been in earliest youth. Full of liquid love and kindliness were they too, as they beamed a welcome to George, a welcome seconded by her outstretched hand, which rested on his head as he bent down beside her.

"You are late, George," she said, with the faintest foreign accent; "but I had not given you up."

"No, *maman*, you know better than that; you know that whenever I am at home I never think of going to bed without saying good-night to *maman*. But I am late, dear; I have had friends sitting with me, and they have only just gone."

"Friends, eh? Ah, that must be odd to see friends. And you took them for a *promenade* on the Lac, and you—— *Ah, bah! quelle enfantillage!* your friends were men, of course. Some of those who sing so sweetly sometimes? No! but still men? Ah, no one else has ever come here."

"No one else, *maman?*"

"See, George, come closer. *She* has not come?"

"No, *maman*," said the young man, rising, and regarding her

with a look of genuine affection and pity. "No, *maman*, not yet."

"Ah, not yet—always not yet," she said, letting her elbow relax, and falling back in the bed—"always not yet!" And she covered her face with her hands, removing them after a few minutes to say: "But she will come? she will come?"

"Oh yes, dear, let us trust so," said George, quietly.

She looked at him, first earnestly, then wistfully, for several minutes; then she dried the tears which, unseen by him, almost unknown to her, had been trickling down her face, and said in a trembling voice: "Good-night, my boy."

"Good-night, *maman*. God bless you!"

And he bent over her, and kissed her forehead.

"*Dieu me bénisse!*" she said, with a half-smile. "In time, George, when *she* comes back! Meantime, *Dieu te bénisse*, my son!"

He bent his head again, and she encircled it with her arms, brushed each of his cheeks with her lips, and kissed his hand; then murmuring, "Good-night," sank back on her pillow.

George took up his lamp, and crept silently from the room, and down the corridor, down the stairs, and towards the outer door. As he passed Miss Marshall's room he looked in, and saw her, bright, brisk, and cheerful, sitting at her needlework, an epitome of neatness and propriety. George could not refrain from stopping in his progress, and saying:

"You don't look much like a 'keeper,' Miss Marshall. I had a friend with me to-night, who laughingly asked me to show him the night-watch of such places as these, of whom he had read in songs and novels. I think he would have been rather astonished if I had brought him across the garden and introduced him to you."

"Oh, they're not much 'count, those kind of trash, I think, Mr. George," said Miss Marshall, who was eminently practical. "I read about 'em often enough when I was a nursery-governess, and before I came into the profession. I daresay he expected to see a man with big whiskers, with a sword and a brace of pistols in his belt, and perhaps two big dogs following him up and down the passages! At least, I know that used to be my

idea. You found Madame Vaughan all well and quiet and comfortable, Mr. George? And left her so, no doubt?"

"Oh yes. She was just the same as usual, poor dear."

"Oh, poor dear, indeed! If they were all like her, one need not grumble about one's life here. There never was such a sweet creature. I'm sure if one-half of the sane women, the sensible creatures who expect one to possess all the cardinal virtues and to look after four of their brats for sixteen pounds a-year, were anything like as nice, or as sensible, or as sane, for the matter of that, as Madame Vaughan, the world would be a much nicer place to live in. She expected you, I suppose, sir?"

George Wainwright knew perfectly that Miss Marshall was, as the phrase is, "making conversation;" that she cared little about the patient whose state she was discussing; cared probably less about him. But he knew also that in the discharge of her duty she had to sit up all night, until relieved by one of the day-nurses at six o'clock in the morning; that she naturally enough grasped at any chance of making a portion, however small, of this time pass more pleasantly, with somebody to look at and somebody's voice to listen to. And she was a pretty girl and a good girl, and he was not particularly tired and was particularly good-natured; so he thought he would stop and chat with her for a few minutes.

"Oh yes, she expected me," he said; "so I should have been horribly sorry if I had neglected to go to her. One must be selfish indeed to deny anyone so much pleasure when it can be afforded by merely stepping across the garden."

"Did she speak of the usual subject, sir?"

"The child? Oh, yes; asked if anyone had come, as usual; and when I answered her, felt sure that her child would come speedily."

"I suppose there's no foundation for that idea of hers?"

"That the child will come, or, indeed, so far as we know, that she ever had a child, is, I imagine, the merest hallucination. At all events, from the number of years she has been here, her child, if she ever had one, must be a tolerably well-grown young lady, and not likely to be recognisable by, or to recognise her, poor thing!"

"Yes, indeed, Mr. George; and it's odd that of all our ladies, with the exception of poor Mrs. Stoneycroft, who, I imagine, is just kept here out of the Doctor's kindness and charity, Madame is the only one who never has any friends come to see her."

"She has outlived all her friends; that is to say, she has outlived their recollection of her. Nothing so easily forgotten as the trace of people we once knew, but who can no longer be of use to us, or administer to our vanity, our pleasure, or our amusement. I was at a cemetery the other day, and saw there an enormous and magnificent tombstone which a man had ordered to be erected over his wife; but before the order had been executed the man had married again, declined to pay for his extravagance in mortuary sculpture, and contented himself with a simple headstone. And the gardener told me that it is very seldom that the floral graves are kept up beyond the first twelve months. So it is not likely that in this, which, to such poor creatures as Madame Vaughan, is not much better than a living tomb, the occupants should be held in any long remembrance."

"I'm sure it's very kind of the Doctor to take such care of these poor creatures, Mr. George; more especially when he's not paid for it."

"That is not the case with Madame Vaughan. I think—in fact, I'm sure—she was one of the patients of my father's predecessor, and was made over to him on the transfer of the business; but though she has no friends to come and see her, the sum for her maintenance here is regularly discharged by a firm of solicitors who have money in trust for the purpose, and by whom it has been paid from the first."

"And is there nothing known of her history, Mr. George; who were her friends, or where she came from?"

"Nothing now. Dr. Bulph, I suppose, had some sort of information; but he was an odd man, and so long as his half-yearly bills were paid, did not trouble himself much further, I fancy."

"Lord, what a life!" said Miss Marshall, casting a sidelong glance at the little looking-glass over the mantelpiece, and

smoothing her hair. "And it will end here, I suppose? The Doctor does not think she will ever be cured, Mr. George?"

"No, indeed!" said George, shaking his head. "And if she were, what would become of her? She has been here for nearly twenty years, and the outer world would be as strange and as impossible to her as it was to the released prisoner of the Bastille, who prayed to be taken back to his dungeon."

"Ah well, I should pray to be taken to my grave," said the practical Miss Marshall, "if I thought no one cared for me——"

"Ah, now you're talking of an impossibility, Miss Marshall," said George, rising. "If ever I have a necessity to expose the absurdity of that saying which advances the necessity for 'beauty sleep,' I shall bring you forward as my example; for you're never in bed by midnight, and are often up all night; and yet I should like to see anyone who could rival you in briskness or freshness. Good-night, Miss Marshall."

"Good-night, Mr. George."

As he rose, shook hands, and taking up his lamp made his way across the garden, the nurse looked after him with a pleased expression, and said to herself:

"What a nice young man that is!—so pleasant and kind! Nice-looking too, though a trifle old-fashioned and heavy; not like—ah, well, never mind. But much too good to mope away his life in this wretched old place, anyhow."

And when George reached his rooms he smiled to himself, and said:

"Well, if that little talk, and those little compliments, have the result of making Miss Marshall show any extra amount of kindness to my poor *maman*, my time will not have been ill bestowed."

George Wainwright was tolerably correct in all he had said regarding Madame Vaughan, though he had but an imperfect knowledge of her history. At the time when her mental malady first rendered it necessary that she should be placed under restraint, the private lunatic asylums of England were in a very different condition from what they are now. They were for the most part held by low-born ignorant men, who derived their

entire livelihood from the sums of money paid for the maintenance of the unfortunate wretches confided to their charge, and whose gains were consequently greater in proportion to the manner in which they ignored or refused the requirements of their inmates. A person calling himself a physician, and perhaps in possession of some purchased degree, hired at a small stipend and non-resident, looked in occasionally, asked a few questions, and signed certificates destined to hoodwink official eyes, which in those days never saw too clearly at the best of times. But the staff of keepers, male and female, was always numerous and efficient. Those were the merry days of the iron collar and the broad leather bastinado, of the gag and the cold bath, of the irons and the whipping-post. They did not care much about what the Lunacy Commissioners did, or wrote, or exacted, in those days, and each man did what he thought best for himself. The date of the Commissioners' visits, which then were few and far between, were accurately known long beforehand; the "medical attendant" was on the spot; the patients, such as were visible, were tricked up into a proper state of cleanliness and order; and the others were duly hidden away until the authorities had departed. The licensing was a farce, only to be exceeded in absurdity by the other regulations; and villany, blackguardism, brutality, and chicanery reigned supreme.

For two years after Madame Vaughan was first received into the asylum—God help us!—as it was called, the outer world was mercifully a blank to her. She arrived in a settled state of stupor, in which she remained, cowering in a corner of the room which she shared with other afflicted creatures, but taking no heed of them, of the antics which they played, of the yells and shrieks which they uttered, of the fantastic illusions of which they were the victims, of the punishment which their conduct brought upon them. Her face covered by her hands, her poor body ever rocking to and fro, there she remained for ever in the one spot until nightfall, when she crept to the miserable couch allotted to her, and curling herself up as an animal in its slumber, was unheard, almost unseen, until the next day. The wretched food which they gave her, coarse in quality and meagre

in quantity, she ate in silence; in silence she bore the spoken ribaldry, and the practical jokes which in the first few weeks after her admission the guardians of the establishment, and indeed the great proprietor himself, amused themselves by heaping upon her; so that in a little time she was found incapable of administering to their amusement, and was suffered to remain unmolested.

At the end of the time mentioned, a change took place in the condition of the patient under the following circumstances. One of the nurses had had her married sister and niece to visit her; and after tea, by way of a cheerful amusement, the visitors were conducted through the female ward. The child, a little girl of five or six years old, frightened out of her life, hung back as she entered the gloomy room, where women in every stage of mania, some fierce and shrieking, some silent and moody, were collected. But her aunt, the nurse, laughed at the child's fears; and the mother, who through the hospitality of their entertainer had, after the clearing away of the tea-equipage, been provided with a beverage which both cheered and inebriated, bade the girl not to be a fool; and on her still hanging back and evincing an intention of bursting into tears, administered to her a severe thump on the back, which had the effect of causing the little one to break forth at once into a howl.

From the first instant of the child's entrance into the room, Madame Vaughan had roused herself from her usual attitude. The sound of the child's pattering feet seemed to act on her with electrical influence. She raised her head from out her hands; she sat up erect, bright, observant. The corner in which she sat was dark, and no one was in the habit of taking any notice of her. So she sat, watching the shrinking child. She heard the mocking laugh with which the nurse sneered at the little one's terror, she heard the harsh tones in which the mother chid the child, and saw the blow which followed on the words. Then she made two springs forward, and the next minute had the woman on the ground, and was grappling at her throat. The attendants sprang upon her, released the woman from her grasp, and led her shrieking to her cell.

"My child, my child! why did she strike my child?" were

the words which she screamed forth; almost the first which those in the asylum had ever heard her utter; so, at least, the nurse told the proprietor, who, with other assistants, male as well as female, was speedily on the spot.

"She used to sit as quiet as quiet, never opening her mouth, as you know very well, sir," said the woman, "and was sittin' just as usual, so far as I know, when my sister here, as I was showing round, fetched her little gal a smack on the head because she wouldn't come on; and then Vaughan springs at her like a wild-beast, and wanted to tear the life out of her, she did, a murderin' wretch!"

"Had she ever said anything about a child before?" asked the proprietor.

"Never said nothing about anybody, and certingly nothing about a child," replied the nurse.

"And it was because she saw this child struck that she burst out, and she's hollerin' about the child now—is that it?"

"Jest so, sir," replied the nurse, looking at a mark of teeth on her hand, and shaking her head viciously in the direction in which the patient had been led away.

"That's it, Agar," said the proprietor; "I thought we should get at it some day. Couldn't get anything out of the cove I first saw, and the lawyers were as tight as wax. 'You'll get your money,' they says. 'We're responsible for that,' they says, 'and that ought to be enough for you.' They wouldn't let on, any of 'em, what it was that had upset her at first; but I knew it would come out sooner or later, and it's come out now, though. She's gone off her head grievin' after a kid, and no two ways about it."

"Ah!" said Mr. Agar, who was a man of few words; "shouldn't wonder. Question is, what's to be done with her now? Mustn't be allowed to kick up these wagaries, you know; we shall have the neighbours complainin' again. Screamed and yelled and bit and fisted away like a good un, she did. We ain't had such a rumpus since the Tiger's time."

"She must be taught manners," said the proprietor, significantly. "Tell your missus to look after her. This woman," indicating the nurse with his elbow, "ain't any good when it

comes to a rough and tumble, and I'm doubtful if Vaughan won't give us some trouble yet."

So Madame Vaughan was delivered over to the tender mercies of Mrs. Agar, and underwent some of the tortures which she had seen inflicted upon others. She was punished cruelly for her outbreak; but that done, there was an end of it. The proprietor was wrong in his surmise that she would give them further trouble. She lapsed back into her old silent state, cowering in her old corner, rocking to and fro after her old fashion; and thus she remained, when the proprietor, having made sufficient money, and having had several hints that certain malpractices of his, if further indulged in, would probably bring him to the Old Bailey, handed over his business to Dr. Bulph.

It was during Dr. Bulph's time that the poor lady had a severe bodily illness, during which she was sedulously attended by Dr. Bulph himself—a clever, hard man of the world, not unkind, but probably prompted in his attention to his patient by the feeling that it would be unwise to let a regularly-paid income of three hundred pounds a-year slip through his fingers if a little trouble on his part could save it. When she became convalescent, her mental condition seemed to have altered. Instead of being dull and moping, she was bright and restless, ever asking about her child, who, as it seemed to her poor distraught fancy, had been with her just before her illness. Dr. Bulph had had some idea, that when her bodily ailment left her, there was a chance that her mind might have become at last clearer; but he shook his head when he saw these new symptoms. Her child, her child! what had been done with it? Why had they taken it away? Why was it kept from her? That was the constant, incessant burden of her cry, sometimes asked almost calmly, sometimes with piteous wailings or fierce denunciations of their cruelty. Nothing satisfied her, nothing appeased her. Madame Vaughan's case was evidently a very bad one indeed: and when Dr. Bulph took Dr. Wainwright, who was about purchasing his business, the round of his establishment, he pointed Madame Vaughan out to him, and said: "That will be a noisy one, I'm afraid, until the end."

The doctor was wrong in his prophecy. Dr. Wainwright, with as much skill and far more *savoir faire* than his predecessor, adopted very different tactics. Although since the departure of the first proprietor of the asylum no cruelty had been inflicted on the patients, all of them who were at all intractable or difficult to govern had been kept in restraint. The first thing that Dr. Wainwright did, when he took possession, was to give them an amount of liberty which they had not previously enjoyed. Poor Madame Vaughan, falling into one of her shrieking-fits of "My child! where's my child?" was surprised on looking up to see the tall figure of the new doctor in the open doorway of her room; and her screams died away as she looked at his handsome smiling face, and heard his voice say in soft tones: "Where is she? Come, let us look for her." Then he took her gently by the arm and led her into the garden, round which they walked together. The new sense of liberty, the air blowing on her cheeks, the fresh smell of the flowers—these unaccustomed delights had a wonderful influence on the poor sufferer. For a time, at least, she forgot the main burden of her misery in the delight she experienced in dwelling on them; and thenceforward, though she recurred constantly, daily indeed, to her one theme of sorrow, it was never with the poignant bitterness of former times. She grew attached to the doctor, whose quiet interested manner suited her wonderfully, and formed a singular attachment for George, then a young man just entering on his office duties, looking forward to his coming with a sweet motherly tenderness, which he seemed to reciprocate in a most filial manner.

From that time forward Madame Vaughan's lot, as far as her melancholy condition permitted, was a happy one. No acute return of mania ever supervened; she remained in a state of harmless quiet; and save for her invariable expectation of the arrival of her child, a hope which she never failed to indulge in, it would have been impossible to think that the quiet, well-dressed, white-haired lady, who tended the flowers, and settled the ornaments of her little room, or paced regularly up and down the garden, sometimes alone, sometimes conversing with Dr. Wainwright, or leaning reliantly on George's arm,

was the inmate of a lunatic asylum, and had gone through such tempestuous scenes as fell to her lot in the early days of her residence there. The "noisy one" had indeed come to be the gentlest member of that strange household; and one of the greatest annoyances which Dr. Wainwright ever experienced was when one of the members of the lawyers' firm who paid the annual stipend for the poor lady's care happened to call with the cheque, and on the doctor's wishing him to witness the comparative happy state to which the patient had arrived, said shortly that "he had enough to do in his business with people who were only sane enough to prevent their being shut up, and that he didn't want to have anything to do with those who were a stage further advanced in the disease."

On the morning after the events recorded in the beginning of this chapter, George Wainwright found a small pencil-note placed on the huge can of cold water which was brought to him for his bath. Opening it, he read:

"DEAR MR. GEORGE,—Madame hopes she shall see you before you go into town this morning. She has something special to say to you. I have told her I was sure you would not fail her.—Yours, L. MARSHALL."

In compliance with this wish, George presented himself immediately after breakfast at Madame Vaughan's room. He found her ready dressed, and anxiously expecting him.

"Why, *maman*," he commenced, "already up and doing! Your bright activity is an actual reproach to a sluggard like myself. But I heard you wanted me, and I'm here."

"Would you mind taking a turn in the garden, George?" she asked. "The morning looks very fine, and I've something to say to you that I think should be said in the sunlight and among the flowers."

"Something pleasant, then, I argue from that," he said. "And you know I'd do a great deal more than give up a few minutes from my dry dull old office to be of any pleasant use to you; besides, work is slack just now—it always is at this

time of the year—and I can easily be spared. Come, let us walk."

She threw a shawl over her head and shoulders with, as George could not help remarking, all the innate grace and ease of a Frenchwoman, took his arm, and descended the stairs into the garden. It was indeed a lovely morning, just at that time when Summer makes her last determined fight before gracefully surrendering to Autumn. The turf was yet green and soft, though somewhat faded here and there by the sun's long-continued power, and the air was mild; but the paths were already flecked with leaves, and ruddy tints were visible on the extreme outer foliage of the trees. When they arrived in the grounds, they found several of the patients already there; some chattering to each other, others walking moodily apart. Many of them seemed to treat Madame Vaughan with marked deference, and exhibited that deference in immediately clearing out of the way, and leaving her and her companion unmolested in their walk.

After a few turns up and down, George said:

"Well, *maman*, and the special business?"

"Ah yes, George, I had forgotten," said Madame, pressing her hand to her head. "I dreamed about *her* last night, George—about my child."

"Not an uncommon dream for you, surely, *maman?*" said George kindly. "What you are always thinking of by day will most probably not desert your mind at night."

"No, not at all uncommon; but I have never dreamed of her as I dreamed last night. George, she is coming; you will see her very soon."

"I! But you, *maman*—you will see her too?"

"I am not so sure of that, George. She was all dim and indistinct in my dream. I think I shall be dead, George; but you will see her; I shall have the comfort of knowing that, and—and of knowing that you will love her, George."

"Why, *maman*, of course I shall love her, for your sake."

"No, George; for her own. You will love her for her own sake, and you will marry her, my son."

"*Maman, maman!*" said George, taking her hand, and

looking up into her face with a loving smile. "But how do you know that she will consent? You forget I am an old bachelor, and——"

"You will marry her, George," said Madame, her face clouding over at once. "And yet—and yet she is but an infant, poor child!"

"There, there, *maman* darling——"

"No, no; don't attempt to get out of it. And yet I saw it all—you and she at St. Peter's after Tenebræ, and I—and——"

"Now this is a question for my father to be consulted on," said George. "He is the only man who could help us in this difficulty, and he's away in the country, you know. We must wait till he comes back;" and he drew her quietly towards the house.

"Poor dear *maman!*" said George Wainwright to himself, as he stood waiting for the omnibus which was to bear him into town. "What a strange idea! Not so far wrong, though! A phantom evolved from a diseased brain, a nothing. A creature without existence is the only wife I'm ever likely to have! I only wish young Paul was as heart-free, and as likely to remain so."

CHAPTER IX.

DEAR ANNETTE.

IT was a noticeable fact, that though the Beachborough folk were, as they would themselves have expressed it, "main curous" about Mrs. Stothard and her position in the Derinzy household, none of them devoted much time to speculating about Miss Annette, or Miss Netty as she was generally called by them. That she was a "dreadful in-vallid" all knew; that she

was sometimes confined to the house for weeks together when labouring under a severe attack of her illness—which was ascribed by some to nerves, by some to weakness, and by others to a curious disorder known as "ricketts"—was also well known. It was understood, moreover, that she did not like her indisposition alluded to; and consequently, when she occasionally appeared in the village, accompanied by her aunt Mrs. Derinzy, it was a point of politeness on the part of the villagers to ignore the fact of their not having seen her for weeks past and the cause of her absence, and to entertain her with gossip about Bessy Fairlight's levity, Giles Croggin's drunkenness, Farmer Hawkers' harvest-home, or such kindred topics. No one ever mentioned illness or doctors before Miss Netty; if they had, Mrs. Derinzy, a woman of strong mind and, when necessary, sharp tongue, would speedily have cut in and changed the conversation.

But although the Beachborough people saw little of Annette Derinzy, that little they liked. Amongst simple folk of this kind a person labouring under illness, more especially chronic illness—not any of your common fevers or anything low of that kind, which nearly everybody has had in their time, and which are for the most part curable by very simple remedies—but mysterious illness, which "comes on when you don't expect it," as though most disorders were heralded and the exact time of their arrival announced by infallible symptoms, and which lasts for weeks together—such a person takes brevet rank with their acquaintance, and is looked up to with the greatest respect. Moreover, Miss Netty had a very pleasant way with her, being always courteous and friendly, sometimes, indeed, a little too friendly; for she would want to go into the fishermen's cottages, and into the lacemakers' rooms, and would ask questions which were not very pertinent, or indeed very wise; until she was brought up very short by her aunt, who would take her by the elbow, and haul her away with scant ceremony. And another great thing in her favour was, that she was very pretty.

Ah, well-meaning, kindly people, who endeavour to cheer your ugly children by repeating the scores of old adages with which the stupidity of our forefathers has enriched our language,

telling them that "beauty is only skin deep," that "it is better to be good than beautiful," that "handsome is that handsome does," and a variety of other maxims of the same kind—when will you be honest, and confess that a pretty face is almost the best dowry a young girl can have? It gains her admirers always, and very frequently it gains her friends; it makes easy and pleasant her path in life, and saves her from the bitterest distress, the deepest laceration which can be inflicted on the female heart, in the feeling that she is despised of men, which, being translated, means that she is neglected, while others are appreciated. Miss Netty was pretty decidedly, but she was in that almost incredible position of being unaware of the fact. Save her own family and the people in the village, she saw no one; and though the gossips were inclined not to be reticent of their admiration even in the presence of its object, they were always restrained by a wholesome dread of the wrath of Mrs. Derinzy, which on more than one occasion had been evoked by the compliments paid to her niece.

It was the more extraordinary that such persons as Mrs. Powler and Mrs. Jupp should have admired Annette, as her style was by no means such as generally finds favour with persons in their station in life. Great black staring eyes, snub noses, firm round red cheeks, bright red lips, and jet-black hair, well bandolined and greased so as to lie flat on the head, or corkscrewed into thin ringlets, generally make up their standard of beauty. Country people have a great opinion of strength of limb and firmness of flesh; and "she be *that* hard," was one of the most delicate tributes which a Beachborough swain could pay. In the agricultural districts those womanly qualities of tenderness, softness, and delicacy, which are so prized amongst more refined circles, are rather held at a discount; they are regarded by the rustic mind as on a level with piano-playing and Berlin-wool working—good enough as extras, but not to be compared with the homely talents of milking and stocking-darning. Personal appearance is regarded in much the same way, elegance of form being less thought of than strength, and a large arm obtaining much more admiration than a small hand. Annette was a tall, but a slight and decidedly delicate-looking girl.

"It isn't after her uncle she takes," Mrs. Powler would say; "a little giggling, flibberty-gibbet of a man, that might be blowed away in a pouf!"

"Well, mum," said little Ann Bradshaw, the "gell" who was specially retained for Mrs. Powler's service, and who, as jackal, purveyed all the gossip on which, after due preparation, her mistress lived—"well, mum, I du 'low Miss Netty's well enow to look at, but nothing like the Captain, who sure-*ly* is a main handsome man!"

"Eh, dear heart, did one ever hear the like!" cried Mrs. Powler. "Here's chits and chicks like this talkin' about main handsome men! Why, Ann, you was niver in Exeter, or you'd have seen a waxy image just like the Captain, wi' his black hair and his straight nose, and his blue chin, in the barber's shop-window. Handsome, indeed!" said the old lady, with a recollection of the deceased Mr. Powler's rotund face; "he's but a poor show; a mere skellinton of a chap!"

"Well, mum, it can't be said that Miss Netty favours her aunt Mrs. D'rinzy neither," said Ann, who, seeing her mistress was disposed for a chat, saw her way to at least postponing the execution of a very portentous and elaborate job of darning which had sat heavy on her soul for some days past. "Mrs. D'rinzy is that slight and slim and gen-teel in her make, which Miss Netty do not follow after."

"Slight, and slim, and genteel make!" repeated Mrs. Powler with much indignation, and a downward glance at her own pursy proportions; "ah, straight up and down like a thrashin'-floor door, if that's what ye mean! Lord love us, here's a gal as I took out of charity, and saved from goin' to the workis, a givin' her 'pinions 'bout figgers, and shapes, and makes, and the like, as though she was a milliner, or a middiff! Well, well, on'y to think!"

"I didn't mean no harm, mum, I'm sure," said the worldly-wise handmaiden, "and I don't think much of Mrs. D'rinzy, nor indeed of the Captain neither, since Nancy Bell—as you know is housemaid up at the Tower—told me how she'd found the stick-stuff which he du make his eyebrows of—black, and grease, and muck."

"No?" exclaimed the old lady, her good temper returning at the chance of hearing some spicy retailable talk. "Du he do that? Do'ee tell, Ann!"

Thus invited, Miss Bradshaw launched out into an elaborate story, rendered more elaborate by her anti-darning proclivities, of the mysteries of Captain Derinzy's toilet, as she had learned them from Miss Bell. Mrs. Powler encouraged her to prattle on this point for a long time; and when she had finished, asked her whether Nancy Bell had mentioned anything about the general way of living at the Tower, more especially as Miss Netty and Mrs. Stothard were concerned.

"Not that anything she says isn't as full of lies as a sieve's full of holes," said the old lady. "I mind the time"—a terrible old lady this, with an unexampled memory for bad things against people—"I mind the time when she was quite a little gell, and went and told the vicar a passil o' lies about her uncle, Ned Richards the blacksmith. And the vicar put Ned into his sermin the next Sunday, and preached at un, and everybody knowed who was meant; and Ned stood up in church, and gev it to the vicar back again; and Ned was had up for brawlin', as they called it, and there was a fine to-do, and all through Nancy Bell. But what does she say of Miss Netty, Ann? Are they kind to her like up there?"

"Oh, yes, mum; Nancy thinks so, leastwise. But no one sees Miss Netty often, mum."

"No one sees her?"

"Only Mrs. Stothard, mum. She and Mrs. Stothard has their rooms away from the rest, mum, lest they should disturb the Captain when Miss Netty's ill, mum; and no one sees her but Mrs. Stothard then."

"Ah," said Mrs. Powler, "David or Solomon, or one of 'em, I don't rightly remember which, were not far off when he said that the bread of dependence was bitter, and these great folk don't bake it no more sweet than others for their poor relations, it seems. So they take the board and lodgin' out of Mrs. Stothard by makin' her a nuss, eh, Ann?"

"They du indeed, mum. I du 'low that's why we niver see Mrs. Stothard in the village, being so taken up with Miss Netty,

and a nasty temper, not caring to throw a word at a dog, likewise."

"How does Nancy think they git on betwixt themselves?"

"What, the Captain and Mrs. D'rinzy? Oh, they git on all right; leastwise, she's master, Nance says. The Captain isn't much 'count in his own house; but Mrs. D. niver let him see it, bless you; and he du bluster and rave sometimes, Nance say, when he's put out, and thinks she can't hear him."

"What puts 'im out, Ann? He hev an easy life of it, sure-ly: nothin' to do but to kick up his heels about the place."

"That's just it, missus. He wants something more to du. He du hate the place like pison, Nance have heerd 'im say, and ask Mrs. D'rinzy, wi' awful language, what they was waitin' and wastin' their lives here for."

"And what did she say then?"

"Allays the same. 'You know,' says she, 'you know what we're waitin' for; and it'll come, it'll come sure as sure.' 'Wouldn't it come just the same, or easier rather, if we was out of this, up in London, or somewheres?' the Captain says once. 'No,' says Mrs. D., 'it wouldn't. When we've got the prize under lock and key,' she says, 'we know where to look for it, and who to send for it; but when it's open to the world, there's no knowin' who may run off with it,' she says."

"A prize!" said the old lady, looking very much astonished —"got a prize under lock and key? Why, what could she mean by that? You hain't heerd in the village o' anything hevin' been found up at the Tower, hev you, Ann?"

Ann, leaning against the door, withdrew one foot from the floor, and slowly rubbed it up and down her other leg—a gymnastic performance she was in the habit of going through when she taxed her powers of memory. It failed, however, to have any result in the present instance; and Ann was compelled to confess that she had never heard of anything in particular being found at the Tower. She did this with more reluctance, as she foresaw the speedy termination of the gossip, and her consequent relegation to her darning duties.

But Mrs. Powler, who had been much struck with the conversation overheard by Nancy Bell, and repeated to her by her

own handmaiden, sat pondering over the words for some time, allowing Ann to remain in the room, and at last bade her go round and ask Mrs. Jupp to step in for a few minutes. When Mrs. Jupp arrived, Mrs. Powler made Ann repeat her story; and when she concluded, the old lady bade her stand away out of earshot, and said to Mrs. Jupp in a hollow whisper:

"What do you think of that?"

"Of what?" asked Mrs. Jupp, in an equally ghostly tone.

"'Bout the prize? Do you think, Harriet, that it can be any of Powler's 'runs'? They used to hide 'em in the first place as come handy, when the excisers was after 'em; and I've been wondering whether they might ha' stowed away some kegs, or bales, or things, in the lower garden, or thereabouts, and these D'rinzys ha' found 'em. I wonder whether I could claim 'em, Harriet?" said the old lady earnestly. "He left everything he had in the world to his beloved wife, Powler did."

Mrs. Jupp, who had been receiving these last words with many sniffs, denoting her content for her friend's notions, waited patiently until Mrs. Powler had finished, and then said:

"I don't think you need trouble yourself about that. It isn't about runs, or kegs, or bales, or anything of that kind, that Mrs. Derinzy meant, if so be she said anything of the kind, which I main doubt; Nancy Bell and your Ann being regular Anias and Sapphira for lying, or the man as was turned into a white leopard by the prophet for saying he hadn't asked the young man for a change of clothes."

"Du let alone naggin' and girdin' at my Ann for once, Harriet!" interrupted Mrs. Powler. "Let's s'pose Mrs. D'rinzy said it; there's no harm in s'posin', you know. What did she mean 'bout the prize?"

"Mean? What could she mean but Miss Netty?"

"Miss Netty! prize!" cried Mrs. Powler, to whom the combination of these words was hopelessly embarrassing. "Ah, well, I'm becomin' a moithered old 'ooman, I suppose?"

"No, no, dear," said Mrs. Jupp, who never liked to see the old lady put out. "I'm sure there's they as are twenty years younger would like to be able to see as far into a milestone as you can. Only you don't know about this, because you don't

get out much now, and you don't know what's goin' on up at the Tower, save from Ann and suchlike. Now my ideer is, that Miss Netty has come into a fortin'."

"No!" cried the old lady.

"Yes," said Mrs. Jupp, nodding her head violently. "Yes, I think she have, and that's what her aunt meant about a prize, I take it. For don't you see, we've asked, all of us, often enough, what kept them livin' down here. 'Tain't that they come down for the shootin', or the yachtin', or that, jest at one season, like Sir 'Erc'les, though he was bred and born down here, and it's his fam'ly place. But there they stick, summer and winter, spring and autumn, never movin', though the Captain's a-wearyin' hisself to death; and there's no call for Mrs. Derinzy to stop here neither."

"Not for her health?"

"Not a bit of it! Between you and me, I think there's a consp—— However, I'll tell you more about that when I know more; meantime, I think Mrs. Derinzy's all right, and I don't think it's for health Miss Annette is kept here."

"The Dorsetsheer air——" Mrs. Powler began; but seeing an incredulous smile on her friend's face, she broke off shortly, and said: "Well, then, what does keep 'em down here?"

"The fortin' that we was speakin' of; the prize that Nancy Bell heard Mrs. D. tell off. Don't you see, my dear? Suppose what I think is right—they've got the poor thing down here in their own hands, to do jest what they like wi'; nobody to say, with your leave, or by your leave; cooped up there wi' them two old people and that termagant Mrs. Stothard.[1] Now if she was away in London, or Exeter, or any other large place o' that sort, why o' course there'd be young men sweetheartin' her—for she's a main pratty gell, though slouchin', and not one to show herself off—and she'd be gettin' married, and her money would go away from them to her husband. That's what Mrs. D. meant about the prize bein' 'open to the world,' and people 'runnin' off with it,' and that like."

Mrs. Powler sat speechless for a few moments, looking at her friend with her sharp little black eyes, and going over what had just been told her in her mind. Her faculties began to be

somewhat dimmed by age, and she required time for intellectual digestion. Mrs. Jupp knew her friend's habit, and remained silent likewise, thoughtfully rubbing the side of her nose with a knitting-needle which she had produced from her pocket. At length the old lady said:

"I du 'low you're right, Harriet, though I niver give you credit for so much sharpness before."

And Mrs. Jupp had many pleasant teas, and many succulent suppers, and much pleasant gossip, on the strength of her perspicacity in the matter of the great Derinzy mystery.

Strange to say, the woman's idea was not very far away from the truth. When Mrs. Derinzy told her husband that their son Paul should have a fortune of eighty thousand pounds, which he should receive from his wife's trustees, she made up her mind from that moment to carry her intention into execution, come what might. The girl was so young, that there was plenty of time for the elaboration of her plans—two or three years hence it would do to work out the scheme in detail; all that was necessary to see after was, that so soon as the girl arrived at an impressible age, she should be taken to some very quiet place, where she could see very few people, and that at that time Paul should be thrown in her way, and the result left to favouring chance. Mrs. Derinzy was doubtful whether anything ought to be said to Paul about it; but the Captain spoke up strongly, and declared that any attempt to dispose of "the young man by private contract" would certainly result in prejudicing him against his cousin, and that it would be much better if he were left to "shake a loose leg" for a time, as it would render him much more docile and biddable when they spoke to him afterwards. Mrs. Derinzy, violently objurgating such language on the part of her husband, yet comprehended the soundness of his advice; and Paul, who saw very little of Annette on the occasion of his holidays from school, and then only thought of her as a little orphan cousin to whom his parents acted as guardians, was left to take up his appointment at the Stannaries Office, without having the least idea that, like Mr. Swiveller, "a young lady, who had not only great personal attractions, but great wealth, was at that moment growing up for him."

The young lady who furnished forth all this feast of gossip to the good folks of Beachborough—gossip not so completely unlike the sort of thing which goes on in larger places, and is practised by more important communities—had not the least suspicion that she was an object of curiosity and discussion to her humble neighbours. She knew little of them—that is to say, of the less-poor class among the poor—for to the lowest and most suffering part of the community she was generous with the desultory kindness of an untaught girl; and she had no notion that she differed in circumstances or disposition from other people sufficiently to excite curiosity or induce discussion Few girls of Annette Derinzy's age, in her position in life, are so ignorant of the world, so completely without the means of instituting comparisons in social matters, or unravelling social problems, as she was. The conventional schoolgirl of real life, though perhaps not the ritualistic innocent of the *Daisy-Chain* literature, could have beaten Annette Derinzy hollow in comprehension of human aims and motives, and in knowledge of the desirabilities of life. She was passably content with herself and her surroundings, and had not yet been moved by any stronger feeling than irritation, caused by her aunt's troublesome over-solicitude for her health and Mrs. Stothard's watchfulness.

She was not, she believed, so strong as most girls of her age, who lived in comfort, and had nothing to trouble them; but she felt sure the care, the restrictions she had to undergo, were unwarranted by her health; and she sometimes got so far on the path of worldly wisdom as to suspect that her aunt made a great fuss with her, in order to get the credit of self-sacrifice and superlative duty-doing. Annette's perspicacity did not extend to defining the individuals in the narrow and ultra-quiet society of Beachborough, among whom, as Captain Derinzy would have said, they "vegetated," who were to be deluded into giving Mrs. Derinzy a better character than she deserved. Like "the ugly duck," who scrambled through the hedge, and found himself in the wide, wide world, the most insignificant change of position would, to Annette Derinzy, have implied infinite possibilities of enlightenment; but at present she was

very securely on the near side of the hedge, and almost ignorant that there was a far side.

The young lady of whom Mrs. Derinzy invariably spoke as "dear Annette," even when she was most annoyed with or about her, as though she had set this formula as a rule and a reminder for herself, was a very pretty girl, belonging to a type of beauty which is rather commonly to be found associated with delicate health. She was rather tall, very slight, with slender hands, and a transparently fair complexion. Her features were not very regular, and but for the deep, dark eyes, and the remarkably sweet, though somewhat rare, smile which lighted them up, she would hardly have been pronounced handsome by casual observers. But she was very handsome, as all would have been ready to acknowledge afterwards who had noticed the extreme refinement of her general appearance and the gracefulness of her figure. Her beauty was marred by no trace of ill-health beyond the uncertainty of the colour—which sometimes tinted her cheeks brightly enough, but at others faded into a waxen paleness—and the occasional restlessness of her movements. Annette was not very striking at first sight; she was one of those women who do not become less interesting by observation, but who rather continue to occupy, to interest, perhaps a little to perplex, the observer. She was graceful, she was even elegant in appearance, but she was not gentle-looking. The dark eyes had no fiery expression, and the well-shaped mouth, not foolishly small or unpleasantly compressed, had decided sweetness in the full fresh lips; and yet the last thing any accurate noter of physiognomy would have said of Miss Derinzy was, that she looked gentle. Impatience, impulse, whether for good or ill to be determined by circumstances—these were plainly to be read in her face. And one more indication was there—not, it may be, legible to indifferent eyes, but which, had there been any to study the girl with the clear-sightedness of affection, would have made itself plain in all its present meaning and future menace—the vacuity of an unoccupied, inactive heart. Annette Derinzy loved no living human being. She knew neither love nor grief, the true civilising influences which need to be exercised in each in-

dividual instance, if the human creature is to be elevated above primitive conditions. She had no recollection of her parents, and therefore no standard by which to measure the tenderness which she might covet as a possession, or deplore as a loss—by whose depth and endurance she might test the shallowness and the insufficiency of the conventional observance shown to her by the interested relatives who furnished all her life was destined to know of natural love and care. She had no brother or sister, or familiar girlish friendships, nor had she ever displayed an inclination to contract any of those lesser ties with which genial and sensitive natures endeavour to supplement their deprivation of the greater. Either she was of a reserved, uncommunicative temperament, or she had been so steadily restricted from the society of other young people, that the habit of depending entirely upon herself had been effectually formed; for Annette never complained of the seclusion in which the family lived, and in some cases received with a sufficiently ill grace intelligence that it was about to be broken in upon.

Like most ill-tempered persons, Mrs. Derinzy had a keen perception of faults of temper, and no toleration for them. She declared that of all things she hated selfishness and sulk most; and the recipients of the sentiments were apt to think she had all the justification of it which an intimate knowledge of the vices in question could supply. She accused "dear Annette" at times of both, not altogether unjustly perhaps, but yet not with strict justice. If she was selfish, it was because her life was narrow; its horizon was close upon her; no large interests occupied it, no external responsibility laid its claims upon Annette. There did not exist anyone to whom she could feel herself indispensable, or even "a comfort;" and though she was surrounded with external care and consideration to what she held to be a superfluous and unreasonable extent, her native shrewdness led her to distinguish with unerring accuracy between this perfunctory and organised observance and the spontaneous affectionate guardianship, without effort on the one side or constraint upon the other, which the natural relationship of parent and child secures. She did not love her aunt Mrs. Derinzy, and she positively disliked the Captain, who

reciprocated the sentiment; as was not unnatural, seeing that he was paying the price of success in his schemes against her peace and happiness by the unmitigated *ennui* produced by his life at Beachborough. For what there really was of fine and noble, of amiable and elevated, in the character of Annette Derinzy, her own nature was accountable, and in no degree her training, associations, and surroundings. She had none of the enthusiasm and fancy of girlhood about her—the atmosphere of calculation, worldliness, and discontent in which she lived was too decidedly and fatally unfavourable to their growth—but she did not substitute for them any evil propensities or unworthy ambitions, and her chief faults were those of temper. She was undeniably sulky; her aunt did not traduce her on that point, though she did not fitly understand the origin of the defect, or make any kind or charitable allowance for its manifestation. Anger rarely took the form of passion with Annette; but when aroused, it was very difficult to allay, and her resentment was not easy to eradicate. The individual in the family whom she disliked most—her uncle—was that one who least often excited the girl's temper. She kept clear of him, away from him, as much as she could, and usually regarded him with a degree of contempt which seemed to act as a safeguard to her anger. But the internal life of the house, as shared by the three women, Mrs. Derinzy, her niece, and Mrs. Stothard, was sometimes far from peaceful. Annette was possessed of much better feelings than might have been expected, her antecedents and her present circumstances considered; and she was sometimes successfully appealed to to forego her own will and submit to Mrs. Derinzy's, by a representation of the delicacy of that lady's health, and the ill effect which opposition and the sudden estrangement of her niece would have upon her. Many quarrels were made up in this way, and not the less readily that Annette was curious about the condition of Mrs. Derinzy's health. She never exactly understood the nature of her illness—which did not seem to the girl to interfere with her pursuing the ordinary routine of a lady's life in a secluded country place, and admitted of all the moderate and mildly-flavoured diversions which such conditions of existence could bestow—but which was kept in view constantly by

the patient herself and Mrs. Stothard, pleaded in support of the impossibility of any change in the mode of life of the Derinzy family, and substantiated by the periodic visits of Dr. Wainwright. Annette was wholly unconscious that while her own illness was the subject of village gossip, comment, and speculation, no one outside had any notion that Mrs. Derinzy was a chronic sufferer, requiring the expensive and solicitous care of a physician of eminence from London, who was well known in Beachborough to be such, and who was generally supposed to come to see the young lady. She would have been greatly angered had she suspected the existence of such an equivoque; for among the strongest of her feelings were a repugnance to knowing herself to be discussed, and an intense dislike to Dr. Wainwright.

Annette's conduct towards the confidential physician, who was said to be so clever in the treatment of disease, and especially of disease of the nondescript, or at least not described, kind from which Mrs. Derinzy suffered, had frequently been such as to justify her aunt's displeasure, and deserve her reprobation as ill-tempered and ill-bred. His appearance at Beachborough was invariably a signal for Annette's exhibiting herself in her least attractive light, and generally for open revolt against Mrs. Derinzy's wishes and authority. The girl would contrive to get out of the house unnoticed, and remain away for hours; or she would pretend illness and go to bed, and lie there quite silent and refusing food, until she was convinced, by the entrance of Dr. Wainwright into her room, and his accosting her with the calm imperturbable authority of a physician, that the very worst way in which to avoid seeing a doctor was by pretending to be ill. Or she would make her appearance just in time to sit down at dinner, and having returned his greeting with the utmost curtness and reluctance, maintain obstinate silence throughout the meal, and retire immediately on its conclusion. All remonstrances had failed to induce her to behave better in this respect, and even Dr. Wainwright's skilful quizzing of her for this peculiarity—which he told her was very unfashionable, because he was quite a favourite with the ladies—had no effect. She either could not or would not say why she disliked

Dr. Wainwright, but she had no hesitation in acknowledging that she did dislike him.

Mrs. Stothard's position in the Derinzy household, however anomalous in the sight of outsiders, was such as to make her perfectly aware of the relations of each of its members to the others, while there was something in her own relation to each respectively unknown to, uncomprehended by, them. She ruled them all in a quiet unobtrusive way, whose absolutism was as complete as it was unmarked, unmarred by any tyranny of manner. We have seen how Captain Derinzy and she were affected towards each other, and this narrative will have to deal with her manipulation of Mrs. Derinzy's "scheme." As for Annette, she seemed to be Mrs. Stothard's chief object in life, as she certainly constituted her principal occupation in every day. But not ostentatiously or oppressively so. If Annette had been called upon to say which of her three associates was least displeasing to her, which she least frequently wished away, she would have replied, "Mrs. Stothard;" but she did not love even her. With Mrs. Stothard, Annette seldom quarrelled; but a visit from Dr. Wainwright always furnished the occasion for one of their rare disagreements; so that when the elder woman came to tell the girl of his arrival one afternoon, while she was lying down to rest after a long ramble, she knew she was bringing her very unwelcome news.

Annette had been restless of late. She was not ill, and there were no symptoms of suffering in her appearance; but she had taken one of her fits of mental weariness, for which her life offered no irrational excuse, and, as her habit was, she had resorted, as a means of wearing it off, to severe bodily exercise, walking such distances as secured her against the danger of a companion, and yet never succeeding in being as tired as she wished to be.

"I should like to sleep for a week, a month, a year," she would say, "and wake up in some new world, with nothing and nobody in it I had ever seen before, and everything one thinks and says and does quite different."

But when Annette was weariest of mind, and tried to be weariest of body, she slept less, and her temper was at its worst.

So Mrs. Stothard found her, when she urged her to get up and dress nicely for dinner, because Dr. Wainwright had arrived, more than usually recalcitrant.

"I shan't," said the girl, tossing her handsome arms over her head as she lay at full length upon a sofa in her dressing-room, and ruffling her dark hair with her wilful hands; "I shan't. I detest him; you know I detest him. What is he always watching me, and trying to catch my eye, for? He's a bad cruel man, and he comes here for no good. What's the matter with my aunt? She was very well on Monday."

"I don't know indeed, Miss Annette; the old complaint, I suppose."

"The old complaint! *what* old complaint? It's all nonsense, in my belief, and he persuades her she's ill for a purpose of his own. At all events, let him see *her* and be done with it; *I shan't* go down to dinner."

"Oh yes, you will," said Mrs. Stothard, who had been quietly laying out Annette's dress, pouring hot water into a basin, and disposing combs and brushes on the toilet-table, "Oh yes, you will. You'll never be so foolish as to make a quarrel with your uncle and aunt about such a thing as that, and have the servants talking of it. Come, my dear, get up; you've no time to spare."

She looked steadily at the girl as she spoke, and put one hand under her shoulder, raising her from the pillow. Annette shrunk from her for a moment with a look partly cowed, partly of avoidance; the next she let her feet down to the floor, and stood up passively, but with her sullenest expression of face.

"Where's Mary?" she said.

"Busy with Mrs. Derinzy. She has been very poorly this afternoon. I'll help you to dress."

She did so silently; and Annette did not speak, but, like a froward child, twitched herself about, and made her task as troublesome as possible—a manœuvre which Mrs. Stothard quietly ignored.

"Where is the odious man?" she asked suddenly, when she stood dressed for dinner before her toilet-glass, into which she did not look.

"In the drawing-room with the Captain; you had better join them."

"No, I won't, not till the bell rings. I'll keep out of his way as long as I can. I'm neither Dr. Wainwright's friend nor Dr. Wainwright's patient."

CHAPTER X.

MADAME CLARISSE.

MRS. STOTHARD had been lucky in getting her daughter into such an unexceptionable establishment as that presided over by Madame Clarisse; at least, so everybody said who spoke to her on the subject, and, as we well know, what everybody says must be right. It does not detract from the truth of the assertion when it is confessed that very few people knew anything about Mrs. Stothard or her daughter; but the fact remains the same. Madame Clarisse was decidedly the milliner most in vogue during her day with the best—that is to say, the most clothes-wearing and most *cachet*-giving—section of London society; and any young woman who had the luck to learn her experience in such a school, and, after a few years, had the money to set up in business for herself, might consider her fortune as good as made.

No doubt that Madame Clarisse's position was not ungrudgingly yielded up to her, was not achieved, in fact, without an enormous amount of work, and worry, and industry, and self-negation on her part; without a proportionate quantity of jealousy and heart-burning, and envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, on the part of those engaged in the same occupation. Even in the very heyday of her success, when her workwomen were sitting up for forty-eight hours at a stretch (Madame Clarisse lived, it must be recollected, before the passing

of any ridiculous Acts of Parliament limiting the hours for women's labour); when the carriages were in double rows before her door; and when, after a drawing-room or a court-ball, the columns of the fashionable journals were seething with repetitions of her name—there were some people who said that they preferred the Misses Block, and roundly asserted that the Misses Block's "cut" was better than Madame Clarisse's. The Misses Block were attenuated old maids, who lived in Edwards Street, Portman Square, in a house which was as old-fashioned as, Madame Clarisse used to declare, were its occupiers, and who had suddenly blossomed from the steady county connection which their mother bequeathed to them into a whirl of fashionable patronage, notwithstanding that they were "*bêtes—Dieu, comme elles sont bêtes!*" according to their lively rival's account.

Madame Clarisse was not *bête*. If she had been, she would never have made the fame or the money which she enjoyed, and which were entirely the result of her own tact, and talent, and industry. No mother had ever left her a snug business with a county connection. All that she recollected of a mother was a snuffy old person with a silk handkerchief tied round her head, who used to live on a fifth floor in a little street debouching from the Cannebière in Marseilles, and who used to whack her little daughter with a long flat bit of wood when she cried from hunger or other causes. When this mother died, which she was good enough to do at a sufficiently early period of the girl's life, Clarisse was taken in hand by her uncle, an *épicier* and ship-chandler, who apprenticed her to a milliner in the town, and was kind to her in his odd way. The girl was sharp and appreciative, ready with her needle, readier with her tongue—she had a knack of conciliating obstreperous customers whose orders had been unduly delayed in a manner that delighted her mistress, a plain, blunt, stupid woman—readiest of all with her eyes. Not as regards *œillades*, though that was a kind of sharpshooting in which she was not unskilled, but in the use of her eyes for business purposes. Mademoiselle Clarisse looked on and listened, and learned the world. No one came in or went out of the work-room or the show-room without being diligently studied and appraised by those sharp eyes and that quick brain.

It was from her appreciation of the English character, as learned in the milliner's shop at Marseilles, that Mademoiselle Clarisse determined on seeking her fortune in our favoured land, should the opportunity ever present itself. Marseilles has a population of resident English — ship-owners, ship-captains, naval men connected with the great Peninsular and Oriental Company, many of whose vessels ply from that port—and these worthy people have for the most part wives and daughters, whose principal consolation in their banishment from England is that they are enabled to dress themselves in the French fashion, and at a much cheaper rate than they could were they at home. There is no gainsaying that the prices charged by the Marseilles milliner, even to the English ladies, were less than those which they would have been liable to in their native land; but these prices, which were willingly paid, were still so much in excess of those charged to the townspeople, that Mademoiselle Clarisse clearly saw that a country which produced people at once so rich and so simple was the place for her future action.

She was a clear-headed young woman, with simple tastes and an innate propensity for saving money; so that when her apprenticeship expired she had a sum laid by—small indeed, but still something—with which she determined to try her fortune in England. She had picked up a little of the language, and had obtained a few introductions to compatriots living in London; so that when she arrived, she was not wholly friendless or utterly dependent. Mademoiselle Anatole—born in Lyons, but long resident in London—wanted a partner; and after a very sharp wrangle, conducted by the ladies on each side with great skill and diplomacy, a portion of Mademoiselle Clarisse's savings was transferred to her countrywoman, and a limp and ill-printed circular informed Mademoiselle Anatole's patronesses that she had just received into partnership the celebrated Mademoiselle Clarisse from Paris, and that they hoped henceforth, etc.

Mademoiselle Anatole lived on the first floor of an old house in the Bloomsbury district, which had once been a fashionable mansion, but which was now let out in lodgings. Under the French milliner, a German importer of pipes and pictures and

Bohemian glass had his rooms, and his name, "Korb," shone out truculently from the street-door jamb, towering above the milliner's more modest announcement of her residence. The entire neighbourhood had a foreign and Bohemian flavour. In an otherwise modest and British-looking house, Malmédie Frères announced in black-and-gold letters, much too slim and upright, that they kept an hotel "À la Boule d'Or." From the open windows in the summer-time poured forth, mixed with clouds of tobacco-smoke, wailings and roarings of the human voice, and poundings and grindings of pianos. The artists'-colourmen had the street on their books (keeping it there as little as possible), canvases and millboards were perpetually arriving at one or other of the houses where the windows looking northward were run up into the next floor, and bearded men smoking short pipes pervaded the neighbourhood night and day.

Even the very house in which the milliners lived was not free from the Bohemian taint. On the second floor, immediately above the *magasin des modes*, and immediately under the private rooms of Mesdames Anatole and Clarisse, lived Mr. Rupert Robinson. Shortly after her arrival Mademoiselle Clarisse met on the stairs several times a middle-sized, middle-aged, jolly-looking gentleman, with bright roguish eyes and a light-brown beard, who bowed as he passed by, and gave her the inside of the staircase with much politeness, and with a "Pardon, ma'amselle," in a very good accent. Asked who this could be, Mademoiselle Anatole responded that it was probably "*ce* Robinson:" asked what was *ce* Robinson, Madamoiselle Anatole further replied that he was "*feuilletoniste, littérateur—je ne sais quoi!*" And Mademoiselle Anatole was not far out in her guess, to which she had probably been assisted by the constant sight of a grimy-faced printer's-boy peacefully slumbering on a stool specially placed for his accommodation outside Robinson's door. Those were the early days of cheap periodicals, and there were few newspaper-offices or publishers' shops where Mr. Rupert Robinson was unknown or where he was not welcome. He was a bright, genial, jolly fellow, with an inexhaustible stock of animal spirits and good-

humour, with a keen appreciation of the ludicrous, and a singular power of hunting-out and levelling lance at small social shams and inflated humbugs of the day; and though he would not have used a bludgeon, and could not have wielded a cutlass, yet he made excellent practice with his foil, and when he chose, as it happened sometimes, to break the button off and set to work in earnest, his adversary always bore the marks of the bout. Generally, however, he kept clear of anything like heavy work, for which his temperament unsuited him, and confined himself to light literature, at which he was one of the smartest hands of the day; and, in addition to his journalistic and periodical work, he was one of the pillars of the Parthenon Theatre.

Those who only know the Parthenon in its present days—when it occasionally remains shut for months, to open for a few nights with "Herr Eselkopf's celebrated impersonation of the 'Jew whom Shakespeare drew,'" *vide* public advertisement and, published criticism from *Berwick-on-Tweed Argus*; when it alternates between opera and burlesque or tragedy and break-downs, but is always dirty, and dingy, and mouldy-smelling, and bankrupt-looking—can have little idea of what it was in the days of which we are writing, when Mr. and Mrs. Momus were its lessees, and when there was more fun to be found within its walls than in any other place in London, even of treble its size. The chiefs of that merry company are both dead; the belles whose bright eyes enthralled us then are portly matrons now, renewing their former beauty in their daughters; the walking gentlemen have walked off entirely or lapsed into heavy fathers; and the authors, who were constantly lounging in the greenroom, and convulsing actors and actresses with their audacious chaff, are some dead, and all who are left sobered and steadied and aged. But all were young, and jolly, and witty, and daring in those days; and foremost amongst them was Mr. Rupert Robinson, who was then just beginning to write burlesques in a style which his successors have spoiled and written out, and was dramatising popular nursery stories, and filling them with the jokes, allusions, and parodies of the day.

Although Mr. Rupert Robinson had been for some time

domiciled under the same roof as Mademoiselle Anatole, he had made no attempt to cultivate the acquaintance of that lady, who was in truth a very long, very thin, very flat, very melancholy person, who had not merely *les larmes dans sa voix*, but seemed to be thoroughly saturated with misery. But soon after Mademoiselle Clarisse was added to the firm, the "littery gent," as Mrs. Mogg the landlady was accustomed to call her second-floor lodger, contrived to get up a bowing acquaintance, which soon ripened into speaking, and afterwards into much greater intimacy. Mademoiselle Anatole at first disapproved of the *camaraderie* thus established; but she was mollified by the judicious presentation of unlimited orders for the theatres and the opera, and by other kindness which had more satisfactory and more enduring results; for Mr. Rupert Robinson, being of a convivial nature, was in the habit of frequently giving what he called "jolly little suppers" to certain select ladies of the *corps de ballet* of the Parthenon; cheery little meals, where the male portion of the company was contributed by the Household Brigade, the Legislature, the Bar, and the Press, and where the comestibles were the succulent oyster opened in the room and eaten fresh from the operating knife, the creamy lobster, and hot potato handed from the block-tin repository presided over by a peripatetic provider known to the guests as "Tatur Khan." In his early youth Rupert had been a medical student at the Hôtel Dieu in Paris, and he strove, not unsuccessfully, to imbue these little parties with a spirit of the *vie de Bohème* which rules the denizens of the Latin Quarter. The viands were very good and very cheap, and though there was plenty of fun and laughter, there was no license.

Soon after the establishment of his acquaintance with Clarisse, Rupert invited her and her partner to one of these banquets, and she soon became popular with the set who were admitted to them. Mademoiselle Anatole they did not think much of; indeed, Miss Bella Montmorency, one of the four leading *coryphées* who at that time were creating such a sensation in the ballet of *Mustapha* at the T.R.D.L., said all the use that that thin Frenchwoman could be made of was to replace the skeleton, a relic of Rupert's old surgical life, which he some-

times brought out of its box and seated at the table, crowned with flowers. But with Clarisse they were very different. She was bright and cheery, sang a pretty little song, and laughed a merry little ringing laugh at all the jokes, whether she understood them or not; and the ballet-girls liked her very much, and invited her to come and see them, and tried to help her in the world. They could not do much in that way themselves, for they made their own dresses of course, and when they had a present of a black-silk gown or a shawl, had no chance of recommending any particular vendor; but when they saw that the Frenchwomen were really excellent in their business, they spoke about them in the theatre so loudly, that the rumours of their proficiency reached the ears of Mrs. Lannigan and Miss Calverley, the two "leading ladies" of the theatre, and incited their curiosity. The crimson-slashed jackets and the lovely diaphanous nether garments, the Polish lancer-caps and the red boots with brass heels, which these ladies wore in the burlesques, were provided by the management and prepared by Miss Hirst, the wardrobe woman, a crushed creature with a pock-marked face and a wall-eye, who always had the bosom of her gown studded with pins, and her hair streaked with fluffy ends of thread. But when phases of modern life were to be represented, the ladies chose to find their own dresses; and hearing of the excellent "cut" and "fit" of Mademoiselles Anatole and Clarisse, were persuaded to give those young women a trial. The result was favourable, recommendation followed on recommendation, and the firm had as much work as it could possibly get through.

It was about this period of her life that Mademoiselle Clarisse, in her visits to the theatre, made the acquaintance of M. Pierre. It was not to be doubted that M. Pierre, as well as Mademoiselles Anatole and Clarisse, was in possession of a legitimate surname in addition to the *nom de baptême* by which he was commonly known; but, following the custom of those of his class, he had suffered it to lapse on coming to England, and though known as "*ce cher* Lélong" by his compatriots, called himself to his customers M. Pierre, and was so called by them. M. Pierre was a *coiffeur* by profession—unfortunately, as he thought; for he

lived at a time when that profession was rather at a discount. In his early youth, when the great ladies wore their own hair dressed in the most elaborate fashion, the *coiffeur* was a necessary adjunct to every well-regulated establishment. Had he lived until now, when the great ladies wear other persons' hair dressed in the most preposterous manner, he would have found plenty to do, and would probably have invented various washes, which would have ruined the health of thousands of silly women and made the fortune of their concocter. But when M. Pierre was in the prime of his life, elaborate hair-dressing went out of fashion, and the simplicity of knots, bands, and ringlets, which could be intrusted to the maid or even executed by the fair fingers of the wearer, came in its stead. This was an awful blow to M. Pierre, whose experience was thus restricted to members of the theatrical profession, or to the occasional preparation of wigs and headdresses for a fancy ball; but he had saved a little money, and being a long-headed calculating man, he arranged to invest and reinvest it to great advantage. At the time that he was introduced to Mademoiselle Clarisse he was an elderly man, but he had lost none of his shrewdness and *savoir faire*. He saw at a glance that his countrywoman was not merely perfect mistress of her art, but generally a clever woman of the world; and after a little time he proposed to her that they should club their means and hunt the rich English in couples. He pointed out to her that his connection formerly lay among the very highest and best classes, many of whom recollected him, and would be glad to give anyone a turn on his recommendation; that he, as a man, had a much greater chance of buying merchandise good and cheap than any woman; finally, that he had capital, without which she could never do anything great, which he would put into the business.

Mademoiselle Clarisse took a week to think over all that Pierre had said to her before coming to any decision. Her ambition had increased with her success, and she had long since ceased to think very highly of the patronage of the theatrical ladies, to obtain which at one time she would have made any sacrifice. For some time she had been in business on her own account; Mademoiselle Anatole, so soon as she

realised a sufficiency, having retired to Lyons, there to weep and grizzle and sniff, and make herself as uncomfortable and unpleasant-looking as the vast majority of French old maids. And Clarisse was fully aware of M. Pierre's talent, and believed in his fortune; and verging towards middle age, and having lost sight of Rupert Robinson, and others for whom she had had her *caprices* after him, and having lost her zest for rollicking suppers and fun of that kind, thought she could not do better than settle herself in life, and accordingly accepted M. Pierre's proposal.

She soon found she had done rightly. Many of her husband's old patronesses consented to give her a trial for his sake, and were so pleased that they recommended her to all their friends. The establishment in George Street was then first opened, and M. Pierre not only did all he promised but a great deal more. For, being always a man of great taste, he turned his attention to the devising of special articles of millinery, then employed his manual dexterity in carrying out his ideas; and not suffering in any way from a sense of the ridiculous, he might be seen hour after hour in his sanctum, with his glasses on his nose and an embroidered skull-cap on his head, singing away some pastoral *chanson* or drinking couplet, while his nimble fingers were busily engaged in stitching at a novel kind of headdress or in sketching out a design for an artistic bonnet. He was proud of his wife's appearance and pleased with her industry and success, and he enjoyed his married life very much for a couple of years, making a point of going to St. James's Street on drawing-room days, and to the Opera on great nights, to admire the results of his handiwork, but otherwise living very domestically and quietly; and then he died, leaving all his worldly possessions to his widow.

The success which had attended Madame Clarisse during her husband's lifetime continued after his death, and there was scarcely a house in the millinery business holding a higher reputation than hers. It was this reputation which induced Mrs. Stothard, ordinarily so quiet and self-contained, to make a great effort to get her daughter engaged as a member of Madame Clarisse's staff. Many young women of Daisy's

position in life would have eagerly accepted such a chance; "From Madame Clarisse's," figuring on a brass door-plate in the future, being an excellent recommendation and an almost certain augury of success. The Frenchwoman was perfectly cognisant of this, and required a large premium with her apprentices. That once paid, the girls were turned into the work-room and left to "take it out" as best they might; unless, indeed, one of them showed exceptional talent and skill—qualities which were immediately recognised by their employer.

Daisy's promotion had, however, not been due to her possession of either of these qualities. She had one, a much rarer, which influenced her removal from the work-room to the show-room, and which led Madame Clarisse and all her customers to take notice of the girl—and that was the exceptional style of her beauty. Ladies young and old would call Madame to them, and in undertones ask her who was the "young person" with that wonderful complexion and that excellent manner. Was she not some one who—they meant to say—not born in that class of life, don't you know; so very bred-looking and *distinguée*, and that sort of thing? Some women would have been jealous of such compliments paid to their assistants, but Madame was far above anything of that kind. She used to bow and to invent any little nonsense as it occurred to her at the moment, enough to satisfy the querists without leading them to pursue their inquiries, and then would dismiss the subject from her thoughts. The girl was *assez gentille*, neat, and even elegant in her appearance, and of good address; looked well in the street, wore pretty gloves, Madame had noticed, in contradistinction to most Anglaises—"*qui sont ordinairement gantées comme les chats bottes*," as she would say with a shrug of horror—and walked well—in Madame's mind another unusual accomplishment in an Englishwoman. Altogether she was a credit to the establishment; and Madame began to take a little more notice of her, talk more confidentially of business matters to her, and leave her in charge of affairs when pleasure engagements, of which she had a great many, summoned her away. Under these different circumstances the girl became a different being in her employer's eyes. Hitherto Madame Clarisse had

only seen her as a quiet impassive young woman doing her duty in the show-room; but when she came to know her, and to see how every feeling was reflected in her face—how the gray eyes could flash and the colour would rush into the pale cheek, heightened in its brilliancy by the creamy whiteness surrounding it—she allowed to herself that "Fanfan," as she now called her, was lovely indeed.

And then Madame Clarisse began to have new notions about Fanfan. The French milliner was not an exceptionally good woman, nor, indeed, ever thought of arrogating to herself the title. In the days of her youth she had not permitted any straitlaced notions of morality to interfere with her pleasures; and in her comfortable middle age she never neglected an opportunity of gratifying the two passions by which she was most swayed—money-making and good living. She cared very little as to what her young women might do during the few spare hours of their leisure; but it was a necessity of her business, that the assistants in the show-room should be presentable persons and of a certain staid demeanour. Fanfan's manners were admirably suited for her place—cold, respectful, and intelligent; but when Madame had discovered the existence of the volcano beneath the icy exterior, had learned, as she did quietly and dexterously, that, with all the good schooling she had gone through, and the restraint which she had brought to bear upon herself, the girl was full of feeling and passion, and that there was "a great deal of human nature" in her, she took a special and peculiar interest in Fanfan's future.

"To make herself a *modiste* here in London without money is impossible," she mused. "To set up in Brighton or Tonbridge, to marry an *épicier* or an *employé*—ah, my faith, she is too good for that! Is it that Madame Lobbia, that little dame, *mince*, and like to a white rabbit, who flies to and from Saint Jean's Woot at the great trot with her beautiful horses, and wears diamonds in full day; is it that Mdlle. Victorine, *feu écuyère* at Franconi's, who leads Milor Milliken such a dance, throws his money to the winds, and laughs to his nose; is it

that they are to be mentioned with Fanfan? And there are other Jews, merchants of diamonds, than M. Lobbia, and other milors as rich and as silly as Milor Milliken. Forward, my Fanfan! why this dull life to you? For me, do you ask, why I give myself so much trouble? Hold, I know nothing! In watching the progress of others one renews one's own youth, and to *exploiter* so much grace and beauty would be interesting, and might be remunerative. *Et du reste*——" and Madame Clarisse paused for a moment, reflecting; then shrugged her shoulders slightly, and said, "*du reste, à la guerre comme à la guerre!*"

But whatever Madame's notions on the subject might have been, she kept them strictly to herself, never making any difference in her manner towards Daisy, save, perhaps, in being a little kinder and showing a little increased confidence in her. It was not until the evening after the day on which Fanny Stothard had written to her mother that Madame made any regular approach to familiarity with her assistant. They had had a long and busy and tiring day, for the end of the season was coming on, as it always does, with a rush, and people had neglected ordering their autumn clothes, as they always do, until the last, and the show-rooms had been crammed for six hours with an impatient crowd, every component member of which desired to be served at once. Madame had given up any *réunions* for that evening, and had taken her fair share of the work and supervised everything, remaining in the show-room until all the girls, except Daisy, had gone. Then she walked up to Daisy, and put one hand on the girl's shoulder, tapping her cheek with the other, and saying:

"*Enfin*, Mademoiselle Fanfan, this dreadful day has come to an end at last. You look worn and fatigued, my child. It's lucky that the end of the season is close at hand, or you would what you call 'knock-up,' without fail."

"Oh, I shall do very well, Madame, thank you," replied Daisy, a little coldly; "a night's rest will quite set me up again."

"Oh, but you must have something before your night's rest,

Fanfan. You are *triste* and tired; I see it in your eyes. You want a—*tiens!* what is it that little *farceur*, the advocate Chose, calls it?—a peg. Ha, ha! that is it! You want a sherry peg or a glass of champagne. We will go up to my room, and have some Lyons *saucisson* and some champagne."

At any other time Daisy would have declined this invitation; but partly because she really felt low and hipped and overwrought, and imagined that the wine would restore her, partly because she was afraid of appearing ungracious to her employer, whose increased kindness to her of late she had noticed, she now said she should be delighted, and followed Madame up the stairs.

Such a cosy little sitting-room was Madame's—low-ceilinged and odd-shaped, like an ordinary *entresol* carried up a story; with French furniture in red velvet, with the walls covered with engravings and nicknacks and Danton's statuettes, and the tables littered "with scrofulous French novels" in their yellow paper covers. The room was lit by one large window and a half, the other half giving light to Madame's bedroom, which led out by a door, through which, when open, as it usually was, glimpses could be obtained of the end of a brass bedstead apparently dressed up in blue muslin. There was a cloth on the table, and Madame bustled about, and, assisted by her little French maid—the page-boy retired home after customers' hours—soon produced some sausage and the remains of a Strasbourg pie, bread, butter, and *fromage de Brie*, and from the cellar (which was a cupboard on the landing with a patent lock, where Madame kept a small stock of remarkably good wine) a bottle of champagne.

Daisy could not eat very much, she was over-tired for that; but the wine did her good, and she talked much more freely than was her wont.

Madame Clarisse was delighted with her; a certain bitterness in the girl's tone being specially appreciated by the Frenchwoman. After some little talk she said to her:

"You still live in the same apartment, Fanfan?"

"Yes, Madame—in the same garret."

"Garret!" echoed Madame Clarisse. "*Eh bien*, what does

it matter? Garret or palace, it makes little difference when one is young.

'Bravant le monde, et les sots et les sages,
Sans avenir, fier de mon printemps,
Leste et joyeux je montais six étages—
Dans un grenier qu'on est bien à vingt ans.'"

And as she trolled out the verse in a rich voice, Madame's eyes looked very wicked, and she chinked her glass against her companion's.

"Perhaps it is because I only live on the third story—though there's nothing above it—but I certainly never feel *leste* or *joyeuse*," said the girl.

"No?" said Madame interrogatively. "That's a sad thing to say. And yet you have youth and beauty, Fanfan."

"Youth and beauty!" cried the girl. "If I have them, what good are they to me? Can they drag me out of this life of slavery, take me from that wretched garret, give me gowns and jewels, and horses, and carriages, and a position in life?"

Daisy was full of excitement; the tones of her voice were thrilling, her eyes sparkled, and her cheeks were flushed. Madame Clarisse eyed her curiously.

"Yes," she said, after a minute's pause; "they can do all this, and"—taking Daisy's hand—"some day, Fanfan, perhaps they may."

"Perhaps they may," said Daisy.

She was thinking of the chance of her marrying Paul Derinzy, whom she knew as Mr. Douglas. But Madame Clarisse did not know Mr. Derinzy, so she was not thinking of Daisy's marrying him—or anybody else, as it happened.

CHAPTER XI.

BEHIND THE SCENES.

WHEN Mrs. Stothard said, "Oh yes, you will!" as comment upon Annette Derinzy's outspoken declaration that she would not go down to dinner, she probably knew that she had grounds for the assertion. At all events, the result proved her to be right. The dinner-bell clanged out, pealing through the crazy tumble-down Tower, and awaking all the echoes lying in wait in that ramshackle building; and ere the reverberation of the noise had ceased, the door of Miss Derinzy's bedroom was wide open. Annette's back had been turned to it, and when she wheeled round, her attention attracted by the current of air which rushed in and disarranged a muslin scarf which she wore round her shoulders, she saw that Mrs. Stothard was busily engaged at a chest of drawers standing in a somewhat remote corner of the room. Annette was silent, but she glanced stealthily and shiftily out of the corners of her eyes. Mrs. Stothard still remained immersed in her occupation. The girl shifted uneasily from one foot to the other, hesitating, dallying; then shook herself together, as it were, and seeing she was still unnoticed, with a low chuckle silently and swiftly passed through the doorway and descended the stairs.

In seaside places such as Beachborough the evenings in late summer are chilly. There was a handful of fire in the dining-room grate, and while Miss Annette was sulking upstairs, and deliberating whether she should or should not come down, Captain Derinzy was standing on the rug with his back to the grate, and from that post of vantage was haranguing his wife and his guest—Dr. Wainwright—in his own peculiar way. When he was alone with his wife the Captain was silent and submissive; when a third person was present, and he knew that a curtain-lecture was the worst he had to dread, he was loquacious and imperative.

"And again I say to you, Wainwright," said he, in con-

tinuance of some previous conversation, "she's got to that pitch now that she isn't to be borne. I can stand a good deal—no man more so; they used to say, when I was on the Committee of the Windham, that I had a—a—what was it?—judicial mind; that was what they called it, a judicial mind—but I can't stand this girl and her tempers, and so something must be done; and there's an end of it, Wainwright!"

There are some men who are never called by any but their christian-names, and those often familiarly abbreviated, by their most promiscuous acquaintance. There are others in whose appearance and manners something forbids their interlocutors ever dispensing with their courtesy titles. Dr. Wainwright, one would have said, undoubtedly belonged to the latter class. He was a tall man, standing over six feet in height, with a high bald forehead, large features, square jaw, and deep piercing gray eyes. His manners were placidly courtly, his naturally sonorous voice was skilfully modulated, and there was an unmistakable air of latent strength about him, a sort of consciousness of the possession of certain power, you could not tell what. He might have been a duke, or a philosopher in easy circumstances, or a "man in authority, having servants under him." Quiet, dignified, and bland, he held his own amongst all sorts and conditions of men, and with the exception of two or three intimates of a quarter of a century's standing, Captain Derinzy was probably the only person living who would have thought of calling him "Wainwright." The Doctor winced a little at the repetition of the familiarity, but beyond that took no notice of it.

"My dear Captain Derinzy," said he, after a moment's pause, "I can perfectly appreciate your feelings. I have not the least doubt that Miss Derinzy's unfortunate illness is the source of great annoyance to you. Still, if you are indisposed to run certain risks, which, as I have explained to Mrs. Derinzy——"

"I thought by this time, Dr. Wainwright," interrupted the lady, "you would have seen the utter futility of paying the least attention to anything which Captain Derinzy may say!"

"My love!" murmured the Captain.

"He is as fully impressed as any of us," continued Mrs.

Derinzy, without taking the least notice of her husband, "with the necessity of our pursuing the course we have agreed upon; but he has a passion for hearing his own voice; and as he knows that I never listen to him, he is only too glad to find someone who will."

"No, no! Look here, Wainwright," said the Captain. "It's all very well, you know, but Mrs. Derinzy don't put the thing quite fairly. She's a woman, you know, and it's natural for women to be dull and left alone, and all that; but a man's a different thing. He requires——"

Captain Derinzy did not finish his sentence as to a man's requirements, for Dr. Wainwright's quick ear had caught the sound of an approaching footstep, and he held up his hand and raised his eyebrows in warning, only in time to stop his voluble host as the door opened and Annette appeared.

As she entered the room Dr. Wainwright immediately faced her. There was no mistaking his figure and presence, even if she had not expected to find him there. Nevertheless, her first idea was to close the door and run away. But she would scarcely have had the opportunity of doing this, however much she might have wished it; for the Doctor at once stepped across the room, and had taken her hand in his, and was bowing over it in his old-fashioned courtly way, almost before she was aware of it.

"There is no occasion to ask after your health, Miss Annette," he said in his soft pleasant tone. "One has only to look at you to have one's pleasantest hopes confirmed. You and the Dorsetshire air do credit to each other."

"I am quite well," said Annette shortly, taking her hand from his.

"Here's dinner!" said the Captain. "You see, we don't make a stranger of you, Wainwright—at least, Mrs. Derinzy doesn't. There's a dam prejudice in this house against using the drawing-room; so we sit stiving in this infernal place, 'parlour, and kitchen, and all,' and—— Where will you sit?"

Sentence abruptly concluded in consequence of unmistakable manifestations of his wife's being unable to put up with him any longer.

"Thank you, Captain Derinzy, I'll sit over here, if you please,"

said the Doctor, with an extra dash of stiffness in his manner; "opposite Miss Annette; and, if you'll permit me, I will move these flowers a little on one side, that I may get a better view of her."

"Why do you always stare at me?" said Annette, with a defiant air.

"Do I stare?" asked Dr. Wainwright. "If I do, I am exceedingly rude, and ought to know better. But haven't you used the wrong word, my dear young lady? I look at you, perhaps; but I hope I don't stare."

"Looking and staring are all the same. I hate to be looked at!"

"You are the very first girl I ever heard give utterance to that sentiment," said the Doctor cheerily; "and you'll soon outgrow such ideas."

"I daresay we shall hear no more of them after her cousin Paul has been staying with us," said Mrs. Derinzy. "We expect Paul soon now, Doctor."

"I have heard a good deal of Mr. Paul from my son, who is in the same office with him. They seem to be great allies, and George speaks in the highest terms of Mr. Paul."

"Is your son's name George?" asked Annette.

"Yes."

"Your own name is not George?"

"No; mine is Philip."

"I'm glad it is not the same as your son's."

The Doctor and Mrs. Derinzy exchanged glances, and were silent; but Captain Derinzy, who all his life had been notorious for his obtuseness in taking a hint, said:

"Why, what a ridick'lous thing you are sayin', Annette! Why are you glad the Doctor's son's name's not the same as his? What on earth difference could it make to you?"

"It could not make any difference to me," said the girl quietly; "only, I don't know why, I think I should wish to like Dr. Wainwright's son, and—and——"

"And the less he is like his father the greater the chance of your doing so; isn't that it, Miss Annette?" asked the Doctor, with his pleasant smile.

"Yes," said Annette, looking him straight in the face, "you're quite right; that is it."

This blunt communication was received by those who heard it after very different fashions. Mrs. Derinzy knit her brows, and, after looking savagely at her niece, shrugged her shoulders at the Doctor, as much as to say, "What could you expect?" Captain Derinzy laid down his knife and fork, and muttered, "Oh, dam!" apparently in confidence to his plate. The Doctor alone maintained his equanimity unimpaired. There was a pause—considering the tremendous character of the last remark—a very short pause—and then he said:

"Now, there's an instance of the injustice which is done by your sex, Mrs. Derinzy, to ours. Miss Netty—with an honesty which is *impayable*, and which, if there were a little more of it in polite society, would go far to the explosion of what Mr. Carlyle calls 'shams and wind-bags'—says she doesn't like me. She gives no reason, you observe; so that I am relegated to the same position as another member of our profession—Dr. Fell—who also was misliked, and equally without reason alleged."

"I could tell you the reasons for my disliking you," said Annette.

It was extraordinary, the change which had come over her face. The cheeks were full-blooded, the eyes suffused and starting from her head, the hair pushed back, the whole look fierce and defiant.

"Could you?" said the Doctor; then, after looking up at her, adding very quickly, "Ah, but you must not. I don't want to hear a list of my shortcomings, or a catalogue of my faults. I'm too old to make up for the one or get rid of the other; and—— Mrs. Derinzy, I must congratulate you on your cook. It is rare indeed, in what I may be pardoned in calling these out-of-the-way regions, that one comes across anything like this *filet de sole*."

He turned his face towards his hostess as he said these words, and spoke in her direction, but he scarcely moved his eyes from direct contemplation of Annette. The girl's face, with the same flush on it, was looking down, and she seemed to

be working nervously with her hands, rapidly intertwining and then separating them, under the table.

Captain Derinzy, at the Doctor's last remark, had given vent to a very curious sound, half-sigh of self-commiseration, half a grunt of contempt. He had not learned much in the half-century during which he had adorned life—his natural gifts had been small, and he had not taken much trouble to improve upon them—but one thing he had arrived at, and that was an appreciation of good cooking. He not merely knew the difference between good and bad dishes—in itself by no means a common acquirement—but he had a knowledge of the arcana of the art, and great high-priests whose temples were the kitchens of London clubs had taken his opinion on the merits of various *plats*.

"Well," he said, after a moment, "that's a funny thing! I know you, Wainwright. You're not the kind of fellow to go in for politeness, and all that kind of thing—I mean, of course, flummery, you know, and all that—and yet you say we've got a good cook, and this is nice *filet de sole!* Why, there are fellows used to tell you about doctors, you know—'Oh yes, it's all very fine,' they used to say, 'for doctors to tell you not to eat this, and not to drink that, and all the time they're regular *gourmets*, don't you know!' Well, I think that's all stuff, for my part. They may know all very well about broth and beef-tea, and all that sort of beastliness that they give people when they're getting better; but I only knew one of 'em that ever knew anything really about cooking, and he was an old fellow who'd been out in India, and was a C.B., or something of that sort; and he told the cook at Windham how to make a curry—peculiar kind of thing, quite different from what you get mostly—that was delicious, by Jove! As for this stuff," continued the Captain, taking up a portion of the lauded *filet* on the end of his fork, and eyeing it with great disgust, "it's dry and tough and leathery, and tastes like badly-baked flannel-waistcoat, by Jove!"

During this speech Dr. Wainwright, although his polite attention to it had been obvious, had scarcely removed his glance from Annette. It remained on her as he said, turning his face in the Captain's direction, and laughing heartily:

"I never tasted badly-baked flannel-waistcoat, Captain Derinzy, and I still stand up for the excellence of the *filet.* However, I'm not going to be led into giving any opinion whether we're good judges of good living, or rather whether we exemplify the well-known exceptions which prove rules by not practising what we preach. But one thing can't be denied—that we hear of very curious stories about fancies in eating and drinking. I heard of one only the other day, of an old gentleman who had had the same breakfast for thirty years; and what do you think, Mrs. Derinzy, were its component parts?"

Mrs. Derinzy, also curiously observant of Annette, roused from her quiet watchfulness, and gave herself up to guessing. Tea, coffee, milk, cream, porridge, toast, ham, eggs, she suggested; while claret, brandy-and-soda, anchovy, devilled anything, and bitter beer in a tankard, were proposed by her husband. The Doctor shook his head at all these items, grimly saying:

"What should you say to Irish stew and hot whisky-and-water?"

"Heavens!" cried Mrs. Derinzy.

"For breakfast?" asked the Captain.

"For breakfast; and eaten in bed every day for thirty years!"

"Oh, dam!" said the Captain. "If you hadn't told the story, Wainwright, I shouldn't have believed it. Of course, if you say so, it is so; but the fellow must have been off his head—mad!"

Before he had uttered the last word Mrs. Derinzy, who seemed to have an idea of what was coming, had stretched out her hand towards her husband in warning, while even Dr. Wainwright moved uncomfortably on his chair. Had Annette heard it? Little doubt of that. She looked up slyly, very slyly, with a half-stealthy, half-searching glance at the Doctor; then raising her head, glared defiantly at her aunt, as though marking whether she were affected by the suggestion. She looked long and earnestly; then finding that Mrs. Derinzy's attention was concentrated on her, she withdrew her glance, and relapsed into her former stolid condition.

So the dinner progressed—pleasantly to Captain Derinzy, as a break in the monotony of his life. Not merely did Mrs. Derinzy, who, in her capacity of housekeeper, kept the keys of the cellar and exercised a rigorous economy in that department—not merely did she increase both the quality and quantity of the wine supplied to the table, but she refrained from joining in the conversation more than was absolutely demanded of her by politeness, and consequently the Captain was able to direct it into those channels which most delighted him. It is needless to say that those channels ran with small-talk and fashionable gossip, and petty details of that London life which he had once so thoroughly enjoyed, and from which he was now so unwillingly exiled. The Captain found his interlocutor perfectly able to converse on these his favourite topics. One might have thought that Dr. Wainwright had nothing better to do than to flutter from club to mess-room, and from mess-room to boudoir, so well was he up in the *chronique scandaleuse* of the day, adapting his phraseology, his voice, and manner to the fashion of the times. The Captain was delighted; great names, once familiar in his mouth as household words, but the mention of which he had not heard for ages, were once more ringing in his ears; the conversation seemed to possess the old smoking-room and barrack flavour so dear to him once, so dead to him of late; and while under its spell, his manner renewed its ancient swagger and his voice its old roll. He yet asked himself how the man whom he had hitherto only known as the sober sedate physician could have recalled such sentiments or borne so essential a part in their discussion.

At length the Doctor's anecdotes commenced to flag, and the Doctor himself was obviously seeking for an opportunity of breaking off the conversation. Mrs. Derinzy, who had been apparently dropping off to sleep, roused up with the declining voices, and catching a peculiar expression in the Doctor's face, was on the alert in an instant. That peculiar expression was a glance towards Annette, accompanied by a significant elevation of the eyebrows, following immediately upon which Dr. Wainwright said:

"And now I must drop this charming conversation which we

have had, my dear Captain Derinzy, and, falling back into my professional character, must declare that it is time for us to adjourn.—Beauty sleep, my dear Miss Netty"—walking quickly round and laying his hand lightly on her shoulder—lightly, though she quivered under the touch, and rose at once from her seat—"beauty sleep is not to be had after twelve, they tell us; and though you don't require it, and though you said you didn't like to be looked at—oh, Miss Netty!—yet I think we're all of us sufficiently tired to wish for it to-night. So good-night! You don't mind shaking hands with me, though you were cruel enough to say you disliked me; good-night. — Good-night, Mrs. Derinzy; you feel stronger to-night? Let me feel your pulse for one moment." Then in a rapid undertone to her, "Do you go with her, while I speak a word to Mrs. Stothard. Don't leave till she returns." Again aloud, "Good-night."

The Captain was making a final foray among the decanters as Mrs. Derinzy and Annette, closely followed by Dr. Wainwright, passed out of the door, immediately on the other side of which Mrs. Stothard was standing. She was about to follow the ladies, but a sign from the Doctor arrested her, and she let them pass on, remaining behind with him. He said but very few words to her, and those in a muttered undertone, but she understood them apparently, nodded her reply, and hurried away upstairs.

"Now, Miss Derinzy, get to bed; do you hear? This is the last time I shall speak to you; next time I shall *make* you."

The tone in which these words are said is very unlike Mrs. Stothard's usual tone; but it is Mrs. Stothard's voice and it is Mrs. Stothard herself—equipped in a tight linen jacket fitting her closely and without any superfluity of material, and a short clinging petticoat—who is standing by the bed on which Annette is seated.

"Come, do you hear me?" she repeats, taking the girl by the shoulder; "undress now, and get into bed. We're ever so late as it is."

But the girl sits stolidly gazing before her, and never moving a muscle.

Then Mrs. Stothard bends down and looks into her face—looks long and earnestly, the girl never flinching the while—and comes back to her upright position, with her cheeks a little paler and her mouth a little more set.

"The doctor was right," she mutters between her teeth; "there's one coming on to-night, and a bad one, too, I fancy."

She goes to a drawer, takes out some article, and lays it on the bed hard by. The girl shoots a stealthy glance out from under her eyelids, sees what is done, sees what is fetched, and drops her eyes again on to the floor.

"You won't! you've heard me, you know, Annette! You won't undress! Come, then, you shall!"

Mrs. Stothard, bending over the girl, undoes the top button of her dress, the second button, the third. The fourth is not so easily undone, and Mrs. Stothard shifts her position, comes round, and kneels in front of her. Then, with a low long howl, more like that of a beast at bay than a human creature, the girl dashes at her throat and bears her to the ground. A bad time for the nurse, this. The attack is so sudden, that for one moment she is overpowered; the next her presence of mind returns, and with it her strength of wrist. Her hands are wound in the girl's long hair then floating down her back; she tears at it with all her force, until the distorted face, which had been glaring into hers, is wrenched backward, and under torture the hand-grip on her throat is relaxed. Then she slips herself from underneath her foe and closes with her. They are both on the ground, locked in each other's arms, and struggling furiously, what is more wonderful silently, for, save their deep breathing, neither emits a sound, when the door opens softly and Dr. Wainwright enters. Annette's face is towards him: her eyes meet his, and the wild rage dies out of them, to be succeeded by a glance of fear and horror; and her grasp relaxes and her arms fall helplessly by her sides, and she moans in a low voice.

"It is here again! Oh my God, it is here again!"

"And only here just in time, apparently, Mrs. Stothard," says the doctor, helping the nurse to rise. "This is a very bad attack. Just assist me to put this on her," he added, taking

the *camisole de force* from off the bed, and putting it over Annette's head as she sat rigid on the floor; "and keep it on all night, please. A very bad attack indeed."

"Bad attack!" said Mrs. Stothard; "I'm glad you've seen it, Dr. Wainwright. You never would believe me before. But I've often told you, in all your practice you've got no worse case than that she-devil there. And yet these fools here think she will be cured!"

"Strong language, strong language, Mrs. Stothard," said the doctor deprecatingly. "But I don't think you're far out in what you say; I don't, indeed!"

CHAPTER XII.

A CONQUEST.

IT is the end of August, and society has gone out of town. Sporting people have gone to Goodwood; and the Lawn, at the period of our story, as yet uninvaded by objectionable persons, promises to present, as it hitherto has always presented, a *parterre* of aristocratic beauty. There is no "limited mail" in these days; but they could tell you at Euston Square of seats for the North booked many days in advance. And there are no Cook's tourists; and yet it would seem impossible that the boats leaving Dover twice a day for the great continental routes *viâ* Calais and Ostend, could possibly carry more passengers. That was before the contemptible German system of *battues* was allowed among us, when *dreib-jagds* were almost unknown in England, and when a day's shooting meant exercise, trouble, and skill, not warm corners and wholesale slaughter; but Purdays and Lancasters, though mere muzzle-loaders, did their work, and Grant's gaiters were to be found on most of the right sort throughout the English counties.

The physicians and the great surgeons have struck work—it is no good remaining in a place where there are no patients—and having delegated their practice *pro tem.* to some less fortunate brother—who devoutly prays that chance may bring some rich or celebrated person unexpectedly to town, then and there to be stricken with illness, and left in his, the substitute's, hands—they are away shooting in the Highlands, swarming up Swiss mountains, lounging at German Brunnen, but never losing the soft placid manner and the dulcet tone which seem to imbue their every speech and action with a certain professional air, as though they were saying, "Hum! ha! ye-es, certainly; show me the tongue, please—ah!" and wherever they may be, the scent of the hospital is over them still.

Passing through Edinburgh, on his way to his shooting in Aberdeenshire, Mr. Fleem, President of the College of Surgeons, gives up a week of his hard-earned holiday to the society of Sir Annis Thettick, the great Scotch operator, and the pair indulge in many a sanguinary colloquy; little Dr. Payne leaves Mrs. Payne to be escorted up and down the *allées* of Baden-Baden by trim-waisted Prussian and Austrian officers, or by such of her compatriot acquaintances as she may find there (all of whom are too glad to pay court to so charming a woman), while he is closeted with Herr Doctor Von Glauber, Hof-Arzt to his Effulgency the reigning Duke of Schweinerei, with whom he exchanges the most confidential communications, resulting on both sides in a belief that the real knowledge of either of them is extremely limited.

In those charming courts and groves dedicated to the study and practice of the law there is also tranquillity, not to say stagnation, for the long vacation has commenced, and the Law is out of town.

Read the fact in the closed courts of Westminster Hall—in the Hall itself, no longer filled with the anxious faces of suitors, the flying forms of bewigged barristers, or fragrant with the sprinkled snuff of agitated attorneys, but now given up to marchings and counter-marchings of newly-fledged volunteers, who—it is the first year of the movement—are longing to be taking martial exercise in the wilds of Wimbledon or on the

plains of Putney, but, deterred by the rain, are fain to put up with the large area of Westminster Hall, and to undergo the torture of the professional drill-sergeant before the eyes of a gaping and a grinning audience.

Read the fact in the closed oaks of every set of chambers, each door bearing its coffin-plate-like announcement that messages and parcels are to be left at the porter's lodge; in the sounds of revelry that proceed from the attorneys' offices, where the scrubs left in town are amusing themselves with effervescing drinks and negro minstrelsy, oblivious of executors, and administrators, and hereditaments; while the "chief" is at Bognor with his wife and children, the "Chancery" is geologising at Staffa, and the "Common-law" is living up at Laleham Ferry, and washing off all reminiscence of John Doe and Richard Roe in daily matutinal plunges off the bar at Penton Hook.

All the members of the Bar, great and small, are away. Heaven alone knows where the Great Seal may be hidden, but it is certain that the keeper of it and the Sovereign's conscience —a tall, straggling-whiskered, gray-haired gentleman—has been seen, with a wideawake hat on his head and a gun in his hand, "potting" rabbits on a Wiltshire common, and has been pointed out seated in a dog-cart at a little railway-station as the "Lar' Chance'lar" to the wondering bumpkins, who fully expected to see him in full-bottomed wig and gold-fringed robes, and who were consequently wofully disappointed, and thought his lordship of but "little 'count." Tocsin, the great gladiator, who wrestles with his professional opponents and flings them heavily, cross-buttocks the jury, and has been known, metaphorically, to give that peculiar British blow known as "one" to the judge himself—Tocsin, whose arrival at the Old Bailey (never appearing there unless specially retained) arouses interest in the languid ushers and door-porters, used up with constant criminal details, but sure of some excitement when Tocsin leads—Tocsin is at Broadstairs, swimming and walking with his boys during the day, and of an evening very much interested, and not unfrequently affected to tears, by the Minerva-Press novels, obtained from the little library, which he reads aloud to his wife. Mr. Serjeant Slink, leader at the Parliamentary Bar,

whose professional life is passed in denouncing the aristocracy of this country as stifling all freedom of political opinion by threats or bribery, is staying with the Duke and Duchess of Potiphar at their villa on the Lake of Como ; and Mr. Moss, of Thavies Inn, 'cutest and cleverest of criminal attorneys, is at Venice, occupying the moments which his *valet de place* allows him to have to himself in working out the outline of the defence in a case of gigantic fraud, the trial of which is coming off next sessions, in his room at Danieli's Hotel.

Lethargy and languor in the public offices, where the chiefs are away on leave, and the juniors left in town appear, from the medical certificates they are sending in, to be suffering from every kind of mortal illness, and where the "immediate attention" promised to your communication becomes more vague and shadowy than ever ; in merchants' establishments, where the clerks, finding it impossible to get "regularly away," compromise the matter by taking lodgings at Gravesend or in up-the-river villages, and running to and fro daily ; in large shops, where the assistants bless the early-closing movement, and bound away on Saturday afternoon with an agility which argues well for their jumping many other things besides counters.

George Street, Hanover Square, is much too distinguished a quarter not to suffer under the general depression. There has not been a marriage at the church for six weeks ; the rector is away at the Lakes ; and the clerk has modified his responses, and is saving his voice until the return of those to whom it is worth his while to address himself. The beadle has laid by his gorgeous uniform, on week-days wears mufti, and on Sundays comes out in a kind of compromise, alternately airing the hat and the coat, but never appearing in both together. The pew-openers' untipped palms are grimier than ever, the regular congregation are absent, no strangers ask for seats, and the dust on the pews is an inch thick. No horsey-looking men, chewing toothpicks, and spitting refreshingly around, garnish the portals of Limmer's ; the silver sand sprinkled over the doorsteps as usual is untrodden, save by the pumps of the one waiter, who knows no one is likely to come ; and as weary as ever was Mariana in her moated grange, he lounges to the door, yawns, and

lounges back, to cover his head with his napkin for fly-diverting purposes, and seeks refuge in sleep. The dentist is out of town; and the dentist's man has exchanged his striped jacket and his black trousers for a heather suit, specially recommended by the tailor for deer-stalking or grouse-shooting, clad in which, he sits during the daytime in the dining-room reading *Bell's Life*, and at night, after delicately scenting himself with camphor procured from his master's drug-drawers, proceeds to some garden of public resort. The paper patterns, marked with mysterious numbers, and inscribed with the names of dukes and marquises, which hang in the shop of Stecknadel the tailor, have a thick coating of dust; for the noble customers whose fair proportions they represent have not had them in requisition for weeks past. Stecknadel is away at Boppard on the Rhine, where he has a very pretty *terre*, to which, if he could only get in his debts, he would retire, and some day become Baron Stecknadel, and live peacefully and prosperously for the rest of his life.

Equally, of course, the headless dummies in Madame Clarisse's show-rooms are stripped of the fairy-like fabrics which cover them during the season, and stand up showing all their wire anatomy, or lie about in corners, unheeded. Madame is at Dieppe, and Daisy reigns temporarily in her stead. The staff is very much reduced, for there is little or nothing to do; and Daisy is enabled, very much to Paul Derinzy's delight, to get out much earlier and much more frequently than she could in the season, and the walks in Kensington Gardens occur pretty constantly, and are much prolonged. Daisy is glad of this too; for not only does her liking for Paul increase, but she knows he is very soon going away for his holiday, "down to his people in the West," and the idea of parting with him is not pleasant to her, and she likes to see as much of him as possible. Daisy has noticed that, with the absence of the great world from London, Paul has grown much bolder: he walks with her without showing any of that dreadful feeling of restraint which at one time galled her so much, is never fearful of being observed, and has more than once asked to be allowed to take her to dinner, to the theatre, or to some public gardens. This request Daisy has

always steadily refused, and their meetings are confined to Kensington Gardens as heretofore, though she has permitted him to see her home to the corner of her street on several occasions.

One hot dusty afternoon Daisy is looking out of the show-room window into the deserted street—deserted save by a vagabond dog, with his tongue lolling out of his mouth, who is furtively gliding about from one bit of shade to another, and hopelessly sniffing at those places where he remembers puddles used to be in the bygone time, but where, alas, there are none now—when she hears steps upon the stairs, and turning round, recognises Miss Orpington, one of their best customers. With Miss Orpington is her father, Colonel Orpington; and looking at them as they enter the room, Daisy thinks within herself that a more stylish-looking father and daughter could scarcely be found in England. Both are tall, and slim, and upright; both have regular features, with the same half-haughty, half-weary expression; both have small hands and feet. Miss Orpington is going to be married to a Yorkshire baronet with money. She has been staying in the same house with him in Scotland, and is on her way to a house in Kent, where he is invited. She has stopped a day or two in London on her way through to get "some gowns and things." She is always wanting gowns and things, and spends a very large sum of money yearly.

Colonel Orpington does not very much mind how much she spends. Through his wife, who was the daughter of his family solicitor, and who died in childbirth a year after their marriage, he had a very large income, every farthing of which he carefully spent. He had nothing to do with the turf; hunted but little, and when he did, generally found other men to mount him; never joined in the afternoon rubbers at the club, and only interested himself in them to the extent of an occasional small bet; kept a good but small stud; had no permanent country place; and during the season entertained well, but neither frequently nor lavishly, and yet managed to get through eight thousand a year.

How? Well, the Colonel had his tastes. Though turned fifty years of age, he had not run to flesh; his figure was yet trim and elegant, and his face handsome and eminently "bred"-

looking. His hair was still jet-black; and though his moustache, long, sweeping, and carefully trained, was unmistakably grizzled, the colour rather added to the picturesqueness of his appearance. And the Colonel liked to be thought handsome, and elegant, and picturesque; for he was devoted to the sex, and had but little care in life beyond how best to please her who for the time being was the object of his devotion.

And yet Colonel Orpington was never seen in any suspicious *solitude à deux*, nor even in the loose-talking, easy-going society in which he mixed was his name ever coupled with any woman's. Old comrades and contemporaries might be seen lurking at the back of shady little boxes on the pit-tier of the theatre, and addressing a presumed form in the corner facing the stage, of which nothing could be seen but a white gleaming arm, a fan, and an opera-glass; but when the Colonel patronised the drama, which was very seldom, he always went with a party among whom were his daughter and his sister, who kept house for him. Sons of old comrades, and other young men with whom he had a casual acquaintance, might lounge across the rails of the Row to speak to the "strange women" on horseback who were just beginning to put in an appearance there; but the Colonel, when he passed them, whether Miss Orpington were with him or not, was always looking straight before him between his horse's ears, and never showed the slightest recognition of their presence. Nor, though living in days when to love your neighbour's wife was a rule pretty generally followed, was Colonel Orpington's name ever mixed up with any of those society intrigues the ignoring of which in public, and the discussion of which in private, affords so much delight to well-bred people. Of good appearance, of perfect manners, and with a voice and address which were singularly insinuating, the Colonel might have availed himself of many *bonnes fortunes* which would not have fallen in the way of men younger and less discreet; but he purposely neglected the opportunities offered, and, while being the intimate and trusted companion of many of his friends' wives, sisters, and daughters, was the lover of none.

And yet he was devoted to the sex, and spent a great deal of money! Yes, and was very frequently absent from his family.

Amongst the property which the Colonel inherited from his wife were some slate-quarries and lead-mines in South Wales, which seemed to require a vast amount of personal supervision. If he looked after the rest of his estate with equal fidelity, he must have been a pattern landlord ; for he would leave town in the height of the season, or give up any pleasant engagement, when he received one of these summonses. When Miss Orpington was a child, she used to tease her father about "dose 'orrid quarry-mines ;" but it was noticed that after she had put away childish things, amongst which might be enumerated innocence, she never referred to the subject. Nobody ever did palpably refer to it, though there was a good deal of sniggering about it in the Colonel's clubs, and Bobus, known as Badger Bobus from his low sporting tastes, was asked out to dinner for a fortnight on the strength of his having said that he couldn't make out how old Orpington always went into South Wales by the Great Northern Railway.

Miss Orpington languidly expresses her pleasure at seeing Daisy.

"You are so fresh, Miss Stafford, and all that kind of thing. Of course I know Madame Clarisse's taste is excellent; but I confess I like a younger person's ideas."

Daisy bows, and says nothing, but applies herself to showing her wares, which the young lady turns over and discourses upon. Colonel Orpington, standing by and caressing his grizzled moustache, says nothing also. Nothing aloud, at least; only someone standing very close might have seen him draw in his breath, and mutter behind his hand,

"Jove! Clarisse was right."

Miss Orpington is large in her notions of autumn costume, and Daisy shows her a vast number of "pretty things" which she would like to order, but is somewhat checked by the paternal presence, in itself a novelty in her negotiations with her milliner. But, deferring to the paternal presence, as to "Should she?" and "Did he think she might?" and receiving nothing but favourable replies, she gives her fancy scope, and makes such of the workwomen as were always retained think that the season had suddenly and capriciously recommenced.

What had induced the Colonel to accompany his daughter? He never had done so before, and on this occasion he says nothing, never looks at the things exhibited, or the patterns after which they are to be made. What does he look at? Miss Orpington knows, perhaps, when, following the earnest gaze of his eyes, she makes a little *moue*, and slightly shrugs her shoulders, taking no further notice until they are in the street; then she says:

"Do you think that girl pretty, papa?"

The Colonel is in an abstracted state, and pauses for a minute before he replies,

"What girl, Constance?"

"We have not seen so many that you need ask," says Miss Orpington, with a melancholy glance at the deserted streets; "the girl who attended to me just now, at Clarisse's."

"I was thinking of something else at the time, and really did not notice her particularly, my dear," says the Colonel, "but she appeared to me to be a very respectable young person."

Miss Orpington gives her little shoulder-shrug, and looks round curiously at her father; but he is staring straight before him, and they walk on without speaking further, until just as they are passing Limmer's, when he says, half to himself, "That fellow will do!" and then to her,

"I want to send a message to the club, Constance. If you'll walk quietly on, I'll overtake you in an instant. Hi! here!"

The man to whom he calls, and who is hanging about the doorway of the hotel, is one of those Mercuries who have now been superseded by the Commissionaires, but who in those days were the principal media for good and evil communication in the metropolis. In the season this fellow wears a dingy red jacket like the cover of an old *Post Office Directory*; but in the dead time of year he discards his gaiety of apparel, and dons a seedy long drab waistcoat with black sleeves. He crosses the road at once at the Colonel's call, and stands on the kerb, touching his broken hat, and waiting for his orders.

"Look here," says the Colonel, as soon as his daughter is out of earshot; "go up to Clarisse's—the milliner's, you know, opposite the church—ask to see the young woman who just

attended to Miss Orpington, and tell her you have been sent to say she must be certain to send the things at the time promised. Take notice of her, so that you will know her again; then wait about until she comes out, follow her, see whom she speaks to and where she goes, and come to Batt's Hotel in Dover Street and ask for Colonel Orpington. You understand?"

"Right you are, Colonel!" says the man, pocketing the half-crown which the Colonel hands to him; then he touches his shabby hat again, and starts off.

"Left her walking up and down in Kensington Gardens among the trees near the keeper's cottage, did he?" says Colonel Orpington to himself as he strikes into the Park about five o'clock, and hurries off in the direction indicated. "Had not spoken to anyone, but seemed as if she were waiting for somebody, eh? Plainly an assignation! So my young friend is not so innocent as Clarisse would have me believe. What a fool she was to think it, and what a fool I was to believe her! However, I may as well see it through, for the girl is marvellously pretty, and has a something about her which is extraordinarily attractive—even to me!"

As he nears the place to which he has been directed, he slackens his speed, and looks round him from time to time. The first touch of autumn has fallen on the grand old trees, and occasionally some leaves come circling down noiselessly on to the brown turf. Away at the end of yon vista a slight mist is rising, noticing which the Colonel prudently buttons his coat over his chest and shudders slightly. Half-a-dozen children are romping about, rolling among the leaves that have already fallen, and shrieking with delight; but the Colonel takes no heed of them. Just then the figures of a man and woman walking very slowly come in sight. The Colonel looks at them for a moment, using his natty double-eyeglass for the purpose; then stands quietly behind one of the large elm-trees watching the pair as they pass. Her arm is through his, on which she is leaning heavily; their faces are turned towards each other, each wearing a grave earnest expression. As they pass the tree behind which the Colonel stands, their faces approach, and their lips meet for an instant · then they walk on as before.

The Colonel drops the natty double-eyeglass from his nose, and replaces it in his waistcoat-pocket. As he turns to walk away, he says to himself:

"Not a very pleasant position that! However, I've learned what I wanted to know. The girl has a lover, as one might have expected. I think I know the man too. To be sure! we elected him at the Beaufort the other day—Derinzy, son of the man who put the Jew under the pump at Hounslow. A good-looking youngster too, and in some Government office, I think. Well, I suppose it will be the old story—youth against cheque-book. But in this case, from the young lady's general style, I think I should back the latter!"

CHAPTER XIII.

ANOTHER CONQUEST.

TOWN was at its dreariest; the little people in Camden Town and Hackney had followed the great people in Belgravia and Tyburnia, by going away; only they went to Southend or Margate instead of Scotland or Biarritz. It was the last possible time of the year at which one would imagine festivity could take place; and yet from the aspect of No. 20, Adalbert Crescent, Navarino Road, Dalston, it was evident that festivity was intended. The general servant of the establishment had washed the upper half of her face, and hooked the lower half of her gown—an extraordinary occurrence which meant something. The fishmonger had sent in a lobster, and half a newspaper—folded in cornucopia fashion—full of shrimps; the à-la-mode-beef house had been ransacked for the least-stony piece of cold meat which it possessed; and from the greengrocer had been obtained a perfect grove of salad and cress. Looking at these preparations, Miss Augusta Manby might well feel within

herself a certain sentiment of pride, and a consciousness that Adalbert Crescent was equal to the occasion.

Miss Augusta Manby had been a workwoman at Madame Clarisse's; but she had long left that patrician establishment, and started on her own account. The name of her late employer figured under her own on the brass plate which adorned her door; and this recommendation, and her own talent in reducing bulging waists, and "fitting" generally obstinate figures, had procured for her a vast amount of patronage in the clerk-inhabited district where she had pitched her tent.

In the fulness of delight at her success, Miss Manby had taken advantage of the occasion of her birthday to summon her friends to rejoice with her at a little festive gathering, and the advent of those friends she was then awaiting.

"I think it will all do very well," she said to herself, after surveying the preparations; "and I am sure it ought to go off nicely. I should have been afraid to ask Fanny Stafford if Bella Merton and her brother had not been coming; but she has quite West End manners, and he is very nice-looking and very well-behaved. It's a pity I could not avoid asking Gus; but he would have been sure to have heard of it; and then, if he had been left out, there would have been a pretty to-do."

A ring at the bell stopped Miss Manby's soliloquy, and she rushed to the glass to "put herself tidy," as she phrased it. There was no need for this performance in Miss Manby's case, as the glass reflected a pretty little face of the snub-nose, black-eyes, white-teeth, and oiled-hair order, and a very pretty little figure, which the owner took care should be well, though not expensively, got up.

The arrivals were Miss Bella Merton—a young lady who officiated as clerk at Mr. Kammerer's, the photographer's in Regent Street, kept the appointment ledger, entered the number of copies ordered, and received the money from the sitters—and her brother, a book-keeper in Repp and Rumfitt's drapery establishment.

"So good of you, Bella dear, to be the first!" said Miss Manby, welcoming a tall dashing-looking young woman, who darted into the room after the half-cleansed servant had broken

down in announcing "Miss Merting."—"And you too, Mr. John; I scarcely thought you would have taken the trouble to come from the West End to this outlandish place."

Mr. John, as she called him, who was a tall well-built young man, dressed in a black frock coat, waistcoat, and trousers, relieved by an alarmingly vivid-blue necktie, merely bowed his acknowledgments; but his sister, who had thrown off a coquettish little black-silk cloak, and what was known amongst her friends as a "duck of a bonnet," and who was then smoothing her hair before the one-foot-square looking-glass over the chimney-piece, said:

"My dear Augusta, what nonsense it is! we who should be thankful to escape from that hot dusty town to this—well, really, this rural retreat. And as for coming early, there's nothing doing now at the West, so that one can leave when one likes."

Miss Augusta Manby then took upon herself to remark that that was one compensation for her exile from the realms of fashion. All seasons, she remarked, were the same at Dalston, where people had new clothes when the old ones were worn out, and never studied times or seasons.

"And now tell me, dear, who are coming?" said Bella Merton, while her brother John sat in the window-seat, and tried to derive a gleam of satisfaction from the inspection of the fashion-plates in *La Belle Assemblée*; "of course that dear delightful old Gus—and who else?"

"I have asked Fanny Stafford, and she has promised to come."

"No! that is fun!" said Bella Merton, laughing.

"And Mr. Burgess——"

"No! that's better still!" said Bella, laughing more heartily: "what! *our* Mr. Burgess?"

"Of course. Did he not tell you?"

"Not one single word, dear. But of course I understand why!" and the young lady relapsed into fits of merriment.

"You have all the joke to yourself at present, Bella," said John Merton, looking up from his fashion-book.

"And you won't have any of it, so far as I can see, during any part of the evening, my poor old John!" said his sister.

"I'm sorry I can't understand your West End wit, Bella dear," said their hostess, with some asperity.

"You will see it all in a minute," said Bella, striving to compose her countenance. "Burgess has been raving-mad in love with Fanny Stafford, whom he has only seen for an instant, ever since Mr. Kammerer gave him her photograph to tint. My brother John, here, of course fell over head and ears directly he saw her; and there's another man of a different kind, with no end of money and position and all that, about whom I must say nothing. So much for Fanny Stafford. But what's to become of you and me, Augusta? There's nobody left for us but old Gus."

"What's that you are saying about old Gus?" said a fat jolly voice, belonging to a fat jolly man, of about forty years of age, who entered the room at the moment.

This was Augustus Manby, the hostess's brother, a tea-taster attached to an establishment in Mincing Lane—a convivial soul, and a thorough vulgarian.

"Saying!" said Bella Merton, whose two hands he was wringing, after having given his sister a smacking kiss; "that we should have no one but you to flirt with, all the other men would be absorbed by Fanny Stafford."

"Well, they are welcome so far as I am concerned," said plain-spoken Gus. "She's a nice girl, Fanny; but I don't like them red, and I do like more of them; and that's the fact."

"Hush! do be quiet," said his sister, as the bell sounded again; and the next minute Fanny Stothard entered the room.

She looked so lovely, that Gus almost audibly recalled his opinion. The exercise had given a colour to her cheeks and a brilliancy to her eyes. Her dress fitted her to perfection, and there was an indefinable something about her which stamped her superiority to those among whom she then was. She was warmly welcomed by all, and had scarcely gone through their greetings when Mr. Burgess joined and completed the little party.

Mr. Burgess was a small consumptive-looking young man, principally remarkable for the length of his hair and the small-

ness of his cravat. Believing in his destiny as an "arteeste," he had originally entered as a student at the Royal Academy; but after severe objurgations from the authorities there, had subsided into colouring pictures for the photographers, by which he realised a decent income. He entered the room with a bound suggestive of hope and joy; but on seeing Fanny he sighed deeply, and abandoned himself to misery.

Then they all bustled about, and the cloth was laid, and the provisions produced, and the half-cleansed servant appeared periodically, staggering under large pewter vessels containing malt liquor; and the gentlemen pressed the ladies to eat and to drink; and the ladies would not be persuaded without a great deal of pressing on the gentlemen's part; and so the meal was gone through with much giggling and laughter, but without any regular talk.

That began when the hostess had fetched from a cupboard, where they were imbedded in layers of brown-paper patterns and bygone fashion-books, and watched over by an armless papier-mâché idol, two bottles of spirits; and when the gentlemen had brewed themselves mighty jorums of grog, and helped the ladies to delicate wine-glasses of the same beverage. And thus it commenced:

"Things must be dull with you now at Clarisse's, Fanny dear?" said the hostess.

"Dull!" said Fanny: "I never knew anything like it. I don't mean written orders from the country, of course; but we only had one customer in our place the whole of last week."

"What will you bet me, Fanny," said Bella Merton, "that I don't tell you that customer's name?"

"Why, how can you possibly know it? She——"

"I don't speak of a she! I mean a he," said Bella, laughing.

"Hes ain't milliners' customers," said Mr. Burgess, with a titter.

"Ain't they?" said John Merton, with a savage expression on his good-looking face; "but they are sometimes, worse luck!"

"My customer, at all events, was a lady," said Fanny, rather disapproving of this turn of the conversation.

"Yes; but she was accompanied by a gentleman," said Bella, still laughing; "and, as John says, gentlemen have no right in milliners' show-rooms."

"I suppose that even Mr. John Merton would not object to a father's accompanying his daughter to a milliner's show-room?" said Fanny, beginning to be piqued.

"Mr. John Merton merely spoke generally, Miss Stafford," said John, with a bow. "He would not have taken the liberty to apply his observation to any particular case."

"This is perfectly delicious!" cried Bella Merton, clapping her hands. "I knew I should soon set you all by the ears. But we have wandered from my original proposition. Can I, or can I not, tell you the name of the gentleman who came with his daughter, as you say, to your place last week?"

"I daresay you can," said Fanny Stothard, "though how you gained your information it would be impossible for me to say."

"Don't tell her, Miss Stafford," said John Merton; "don't help her in the least degree. It's scarcely a fair subject of conversation; at least, it's one which I'm sure has no interest for me."

"Was he a nice cross old dear?" said his sister; "and didn't he like to hear about the fine gentleman that admired Fanny?"

John Merton looked so black at this remark, that Mr. Burgess thought it best to cut into the conversation. So he said:

"But you haven't yet told us the name of the gentleman, Miss Merton."

"Haven't I?" said Bella; "well, I'll be as good as my word. Colonel Orpington. Am I right, Fanny?"

"I daresay you are. Miss Orpington's father came with her. What his title may be I haven't the least idea."

"But he knows what your title is, dear, and accords it to you quite publicly."

"And what title does he give Miss Stafford, pray?" asked John Merton, angrily.

"That of the prettiest girl in London!"

"I never heard a swell go so near the truth," growled John, half pleased and half annoyed.

"Don't you think it is almost time for you to speak a little more plainly, Bella?" asked Fanny. "How do you know this Colonel Orpington, and what has he been saying about me?"

"*This* Colonel Orpington, indeed!" cried Miss Merton. "My dear, *this* Colonel Orpington is simply one of the best men of the day, extremely rich, and—well, you know—one of those nice fellows who are liked by everybody. He came into our place the other day, and when I looked up from my desk in the front room, where I was writing a private letter—for I had nothing else to do—I saw him; and I thought to myself, 'I know you, Colonel Orpington! I've seen you about often. So you've come for a sitting, have you? Won't Mr. Kammerer be wild to think you should have come when he was out of town!' However, he came straight towards me; and he took off his hat, like a gentleman as he is, and he said, 'There is a portrait in a frame outside the door which strikes me as a wonderful example of photography, of which I am a connoisseur.' I knew what he meant at once, bless you; but I said, 'You mean the gentleman in the skull-cap and the long beard—Professor Gilks?' He muttered something about Professor Gilks—I daren't say what—but then said No; he meant the coloured female head—was it for sale? I told him I could not answer him without referring to Mr. Kammerer, who was at Ramsgate. The Colonel begged me to telegraph to him, and he would call next day. He did call next day, took the photograph, and paid twenty guineas for it, which was a good thing for Mr. Kammerer."

"Very likely," burst in John Merton; "but a bad thing for art, and decency, and——"

"Don't distress yourself, John! Very likely it was all you say; but, you see, Mr. Kammerer is not here for you to pitch into, and Fanny couldn't help her portrait being bought by an admirer. Oh, he was an admirer, Fanny; for when I tied it up for him, he said out, 'It's lovely, but it doesn't do justice to the original.' And when I asked him did he know the original, he

said he thought he had had that honour. And so it's no good your bursting into virtuous indignation."

Her brother shrugged his shoulders and was silent; but Fanny Stothard said:

"Don't you think this joke has gone far enough? Augusta and Mr. Burgess here are sitting in wild astonishment, as well they may be. Let us change the conversation for the few minutes before we break up."

Late that night Fanny Stothard sat on the side of her bed in her room in South Molton Street, her hands clasped behind her head, her body gently swaying to and fro as she pondered over all she had heard that evening. On the table lay a letter from Paul Derinzy. It was the second she had had, and he had not been away from London five days. The first she had torn at eagerly and devoured its contents at once; this lay unopened.

"Very rich, that woman said," she muttered, "and a great man in his way. Fancy his buying the portrait, and after only seeing me once! That was very nice of him. Not in the least old-looking, and everybody likes him, Bella said. What a funny thing his recognising that photograph, and—— How horrible the journey home was to-night, and what detestable people in the omnibus!—such pushing and tramping on one's feet, and—I had no idea of that! I thought he looked hard at me once or twice, but I never imagined that he took any particular notice. Colonel Orpington! I shall look out his name in the *Court Guide* to-morrow, when I get to George Street, and see all about him. Had the honour of knowing me, he told Bella Merton! Ugh! how sick I am of this room, and how wearied of this life! Ah well, Paul's letter will keep till to-morrow; I'm sure I know what it's about. That was really very nice about the portrait! I wonder when Colonel Orpington will come back to town?"

Then she frowned a little as she said, "What could have made that young man, Bella's brother, so disagreeable about all that? He couldn't possibly—and yet I don't know. He looked so earnestly at me, and spoke so strongly about that business of the portrait, that I have half an idea he resented it on my behalf. What impertinence! And yet he meant

merely to show his regard for me. How dreadfully in earnest he seemed! And Paul too! I shall have a difficulty in managing them all, I see that clearly."

CHAPTER XIV.

PAUL AT HOME.

IT does not matter much to George Wainwright whether London is empty or full. His books, his work, and his healthful play go on just the same in winter and summer, in spring and autumn. He only knows it is the season by the fact of seeing more people in the streets, more horses and carriages in the Park across which he strides to his home; and when other men go away on leave, he remains at the office without the least desire to change the regular habits of his life. He has a splendid constitution, perfectly sound, and unimpaired by excess of any description; can do any amount of work without its having any influence on him; and never had need to go away "on medical certificate," as is the case with so many of his brethren at the Stannaries Office.

There is a decidedly autumnal touch in the air as it plays round George Wainwright, striding across the Park this October morning. There is sunshine, but it is thin and veneered, and very unlike the glorious summer article; looks as if it had lost strength in its struggle with the fog which preceded it, and as though it would make but a poor fight against the mist which would come creeping up early in the afternoon. But few leaves remain on the trees, and they are yellow and veinous, and swirl dismally round and round in their descent to the moist earth, where their already fallen comrades are being swept into heaps, and pressed down into barrows, and wheeled away by the

gardeners. The ordinarily calm waters of the Serpentine are lashed into miniature waves, and the pleasure-boats have vanished from its surface, as have the carriages from the Drive and the horses from the Row. Only one solitary equestrian stands out like a speck in the distance; for it is Long Vacation still, and the judges and the barristers, those unvarying early riders and constant examples of the apparently insurmountable difficulty of combining legal lore with graceful equitation, have not yet returned to town.

Ten o'clock strikes from the Horse Guards clock as George walks under the archway, and makes his way across to the little back street where the Stannaries Office is situated. Always punctual, he is more particular than ever just now, for all the others of any standing are away; and George was perfectly aware, from long experience, that if someone responsible was not there to look after the junior clerks, those young gentlemen would not come at all. As it was, he finds himself the first arrival, and has changed his coat and rung for his letters, for even the messengers get lax and careless at this time of year—when the door opens and Mr. Dunlop enters, bringing with him a very strong flavour of fresh tobacco, and not stopping short in the popular melody which he is humming to say good-day until he has arrived at the end of the verse.

"'And he cut his throat with a pane of glass, and stabbed his donkey ar-ter!'" sings Mr. Dunlop, very much prolonging the last note. "That's what I call an impressive ending to a tragic ballad!—Good-morning, Mr. Wainwright! I'm glad to see you here in good time for once, sir, at all events."

"Billy, Billy, if you were here a little earlier yourself, you wouldn't be pitched into so constantly."

"Perhaps not, sir, though 'pitched into' is scarcely a phrase to apply to a gentleman in Her Majesty's Civil Service. However, my position is humble, and I must demean myself accordingly. I am a norphan, sir, a norphan, and have no swell parents to stay with in the country like Mr. Derinzy, whose remarkably illegible and insignificant handwriting I recognise on this letter which Hicks has brought in for you."

"Paul's hand, by Jove!" says George, "and this other one is Courtney's, the chief's."

George opens the smaller letter, and emits a short whistle as he glances through its contents. The whistle and the expression of George's face are not lost upon Billy Dunlop, who says:

"Dear old person going to make it three months' leave, this year, instead of two? or perhaps not coming back at all, but sends address where his salary will find him?"

"On the contrary, he's coming back at once; he will be on duty to-morrow."

"By Jove! and he's not been away six weeks yet. The poet was right, sir. 'He stabbed his donkey arter!' There was nothing else left for him to do."

"But," says George, laughing, "he says he thinks he shall go away to Brighton in November, and advises me, if I want any leave, to take it now, that I may be back when he goes."

"What an inexpressible old ruffian! What does he say about my leave?"

"Not a word. What could he say, Billy? You've had all your leave ages ago."

Mr. Dunlop, who has retired into the sanctuary behind the washing-screen, makes a rapid reappearance at these words, and says hurriedly:

"I thought so. I thought that that pleasant month of March would be the only portion of the year allotted to me for recreation. March, by George! Why, Ettrick, Teviotdale, and all the rest of them put together, are not worth speaking about. It seems a year ago. I can only recollect it because it was so beastly cold I was obliged to spend nearly all the time in bed. That's a nice way for a man to enjoy his holiday! While you fellows are cutting about, and—— Hollo! what's the matter with G. W.? He looks as if he were rapidly preparing himself for his father's asylum. Some bad news from P. D., I suppose."

These last remarks of Mr. Dunlop's are based upon his

observation of George Wainwright's face, the expression of which is set and serious.

"Hold on with your chaff for a minute, Billy," he says, looking up. "Paul is writing on business, and I want just to get hold of it as I go along."

So Mr. Dunlop thinks he will do a little official work; and having selected a sheet of foolscap with "Office of H.M. Stannaries" lithographed on it, fills in the date in a very bold and flowing hand (the gentlemen of the Stannaries Office always boasted that they were not "mere clerks," and that their penmanship "didn't matter"), then takes out his penknife, and begins adjusting the toilet of his nails.

Meanwhile George Wainwright plods his way with difficulty through Paul's letter where the writing is so small and the lines so close together, and his brows become more contracted and his face more set and stern as he proceeds. This is what he reads:

"*The Tower, Beachborough.*

"DEAR OLD MAN,—I have so much writing at that confounded shop—don't grin, now: I can see your cynical old under-lip shooting out at the statement—that I thought I'd give my pen a holiday as well as myself; and indeed I should not favour you with a sight of that 'bowld fist' which so disgusts that old beast Branwhite—saw his name in the *Post* as having been present at the Inverness gathering, hanging on to swells as usual—if there had not been absolute occasion.

"By Jove? what a tremendously long sentence that is! Rather broken-backed and weak in the knees too, eh? Don't seem to hang well together? Rather a 'solution of continuity,' as they call it, isn't there? Never mind, you'll understand what I mean. You see, my dear old George, I don't know whether it is because I'm bored by being in the country—and a fellow who is accustomed to town life must necessarily hate everything else, and find it all horribly slow and dreary—but the fact is, that instead of my leave doing me good, and setting me up, and all that kind of thing, I find myself utterly

depressed and wretched, and nothing like half so well or so jolly as when I came down here.

"I thought I should go out boating and swimming and riding, and generally larking; and instead of that I find myself sitting grizzling over my pipe, and wondering what on earth I'm to do until evening, and how I shall get through the time after dark until I can go to bed.

"You would go blazing away at your old books, or your writing, or your music; but I'm not in that line, old boy. I haven't got what people call 'resources'—in any way, by Jove! tin, or anything else. I want to be amused, and I don't get it here, and that's all about it.

"You see, the truth is—and what's the good of having a fellow for your pal, if you can't speak the truth to him, and what people in the play call 'unbosom yourself,' and so on?—the truth is, our household here is most infernally dull. I hadn't seen any of them for so long, that they all came upon me like novelties; and they're so deuced original, that they would be most interesting studies, if they did not happen to be one's own people, don't you see, and that takes all the humour out of the performance. There's my governor, for instance, is the most wonderful party! If he were anybody else's governor he'd be quite good fun enough for me to render the place sufficiently agreeable. I don't think I should want any greater amusement than seeing him go yawning about the house and through the village, bored out of his life, and wishing everything at the devil. He seemed to pluck up a bit when I first came down, and wanted to know all the news about town, and talked about this fellow and that fellow—I knew the names well enough, and had met a good many of the people; but when we came to compare notes, I found that the governor was inquiring about the fathers of the fellows I knew—fellows with the same names, you understand; and when I explained this to him, and told him that most of his pals were dead or gone under, don't you know, and that their sons reigned in their stead, he cut up rather rough, and said he didn't know what the world was coming to, and that young men weren't half as well brought-up nowadays as they were in his time.

Funny idea that, wasn't it? As though we could help these old swells going under! Fact is—I don't like to confess it, and would not to anybody but you, George—but since the governor has got off the main line of life they have shunted him into the siding for fogeydom, and there's not much chance of his coming out again.

"I find a great change in my mother too. I've spoken to you so often about all these domesticities, that I don't mind gossiping to you now. It's an immense relief to me. I feel if I had not someone to confide in, I should blow up. Well, you know, my mother was always the best man in our household, and managed everything according to her own will; but then she had a certain tact and *savoir faire*, a way of ruling us all that no one could find fault with; and though we grumbled inwardly, we never took each other into confidence, or combined against the despotism. I find that's all altered now. Either she has lost tact, or we have lost patience—a little of both, perhaps; but, at all events, her attempts at rule and dictation are very palpable and very pronounced, and our ripeness for revolt is no longer concealed. In point of fact, the one thing which the governor and I have in common is our impatience of the female thrall, and if ever we combine, it will be to pass the Salic law.

"And apropos of that—rather neatly expressed, I find that is—there is another female pretender to power—my cousin Annette; you have heard me speak of her as a ward of my people's, and resident with them. She has grown into a fine young woman, though her manners are decidedly odd. I suppose this is country breeding: said as much to the governor, who made a very odd face and changed the subject. Whether he thought it the height of impudence in me to suppose that anyone who had had the advantage of studying him daily could have country manners, or whether there was any other reason, I don't know.

"One thing there can be no doubt of, and that is, that I am always being thrown *tête-à-tête* with this young woman, principally, as I imagine, by my mother's connivance. This might have been amusing under other circumstances, for, as

I said before, she is remarkably personable and nice—not in my line, but still a very fine young woman; but, situated as I am, I do not avail myself in the slightest degree of the opportunities offered.

"Nor, I am bound to say, does Annette. She sits silent, and sometimes actually sullen. She is a most extraordinary girl, George; I can't make her out a bit. Sometimes she won't speak for hours, sometimes won't even come down amongst us, and—— There is something deuced odd in all this! I wish I had your clear old head here to scrutinise matters with me, and help me in forming a judgment on them.

"You know what I refer to just above, about 'under other circumstances?' Certain interview in Kensington Gardens, with certain party that you happened to witness. Don't you recollect? Oh Lord, George, if you knew what an utterly gone 'coon I am in that quarter, you would pity me. No, you wouldn't! What's the use of talking to such a dried-up old file as you about such things? I don't believe you were ever in love in your life, ever felt the smallest twinge of what those stupid fools the poets call the 'gentle passion.' Gentle, by Jove! it's anything but gentle with me—upsets me frightfully, takes away all my sleep, and worries me out of my life. I swear to you, that now I am separated from her, I don't know how to live without her, and wonder how I ever got on before I knew her. When I think I'm far away from everybody, on the cliffs or down by the sea, I find myself holloing out aloud, and stamping my foot, for sheer rage at the thought that so much more time must go by before I can see her again. I told you it was a strong case, George, when you spoke to me about it; but I had no idea then that it was so strong as it is, or that my happiness was half so much bound up in her."

There was a space here, and the conclusion of the letter, from the appearance of the ink, had evidently been written at a different time.

"I left off there, George, thinking I might have something else to say to you later; and so I have, but of a very different kind from what I imagined.

"I have had a tremendous scene with my mother. She has given up hinting, and spoken out plainly at last. It appears that her whole soul is set upon my marrying my cousin Annette. This is the whole and sole reason of their living out of town, and of the poor governor being expatriated from the Pall Mall pavement and the gossip he loves so well. It appears that Annette is an heiress—in rather a large way too, will have no end of money—and that my poor dear mother, determined to secure her for me, has been hiding down here in this horrible seclusion, in order that the girl may form no 'detrimental' acquaintance of youths who might be likely to cut me out! Not very flattering to me, is it? But still it was well meant, poor soul!

"Now, you know, George, this won't do at all. If I entered into this plan for a moment, I should have to give up that other little affair at once; *and nothing earthly would make me do that!* Besides, I do not care for Annette; and as to her money, that would be deuced little good to me, if—— However, one goes with the other, so we needn't say any more about it.

"Of course, I fought off at once—pleaded Annette's bad state of health—she is ill, often keeps her room, and has to have a nurse entirely given up to her—said we were both very young, and asked for time—but all no good. My mother was very strong on the subject; and the governor, who sees a chance of his jailership being put an end to, and of his getting back to haunts of civilisation, backed her up with all his might, which is not much, poor old boy!

"So all I could do was to say that I never did anything without your advice, and to suggest that you should be asked down here at once. My mother wouldn't have it at first, until I said she feared you were a gay young dog, who would make running with Annette to my detriment; and then I told her what a quiet, solemn, old-fashioned old touch you really were,

and then she consented. So, dear old man, you're booked and in for it. I really do want your counsel awfully, though I only thought of making you a scapegoat when I first suggested your visit. But now I am looking forward to it with the greatest anxiety from day to day. Come at once. You can easily arrange about your leave—come, and help me in this fix. *But recollect, don't attempt to break off the acquaintance between me and that young lady, for that would be utterly useless!* God bless you. Come at once.

"Yours ever, P. D."

George Wainwright reads this letter through twice attentively, and the frown deepens on his forehead. Then he folds it up and places it in his breast-pocket, and remains for ten minutes, slowly stroking his beard with his hand, and pondering the while. Then he looks up, and says:

"Billy, I'm thinking of taking the chief's advice, and going for a little leave."

"Oh, certainly," says Mr. Dunlop; "don't mind me, I beg. Leave the whole work of the department on my shoulders, pray. You'll find I'm equal to the occasion, sir; and perhaps in some future time, when I have 'made by force my merit known'—when the Right Honourable William Dunlop is First Lord of the Treasury, has clutched the golden keys, and shaped the whisper of the Throne into saying in the ear of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 'Put W. D. on the pension list for ten thou.'—I may thank you for having given me the opportunity of distinguishing myself!"

CHAPTER XV.

ON THE ALERT.

"WELL, George, old man, how are you? No need to ask, though. You're looking as fresh as a daisy, and that after a couple of hundred miles of rail, a long drive in a dog-cart, and a family dinner with people who were strangers to you! And after all that, you're up and out by nine o'clock. I told my people you were the most wonderful fellow in the world, and now I think they'd believe it."

"I haven't done anything yet to assert any claim to such a character, at all events, Paul. I'm always an early riser, and most certainly I wasn't going to loaf away a splendid morning like this between the sheets. Where are the ladies and the Captain?"

"My mother is generally occupied with domestic matters in the morning, and Annette never shows till later in the day. If the governor had had his will, he would have liked to be with us now. He was immensely fetched by you last night, and jabbered away as I have nôt heard him for years. But a little of the governor goes a long way; and I told him we had business to talk over this morning; so he's off on his own hook somewhere, poor old boy."

"I don't think you appreciate your father quite sufficiently, Master Paul. He made himself remarkably agreeable last night; and there was a kind of *Pelham* and *Tremaine* flavour about his conversation which was particularly refreshing in this back-slapping, slangy age."

"And Annette—what did you think of her?"

"I was very much struck with her appearance. I'm not much of a judge in such matters, but surely she is very pretty."

"Ya-as," said Paul with a half-conquering air, caressing his moustache; "ya-as, she is pretty. What did you think of her—of her altogether, you know?"

"I thought her manner very charming. A little timid and nervous, as was natural on being introduced to a stranger. Well, even more than timid: a little weary, as though scarcely recovered from some illness or excitement."

"Ah, that was her illness. She had a bout of it the very day I sent off my letter to you."

"Well, she gave me that idea. But what on earth did you mean, young fellow, by telling me in that letter that your cousin was dull and *distraite*? I never saw anyone more interested or more interesting; and what she said about Wordsworth's sonnets and his poem of 'Ruth' was really admirably thought out and excellently put."

"Exactly. And yet you demur at my calling you the most wonderful fellow in the world! Why, my dear old George, you are the first person in all our experience of her that has ever yet made Annette talk."

"Perhaps because I am the first person who has listened to her."

"Not at all! We've all of us tried it. The governor's not much, to be sure, and those who don't care to hear perpetually about the Tamburini row, and D'Orsay, and Gore House, and 'glorious Jack Reeve at the Adelphi, sir!' and those kind of interesting anecdotes, soon get bored. And I'm not much, and not often here. But my mother, as you'll soon find out, is a clever woman, capital talker, and all that; and so far as I can learn, Miss Netty has hitherto utterly refused to be interested and amused even by that most fascinating of men to the sex, your father."

"My father! Why, where did he ever see Miss Derinzy?"

"Here, in this very house. Ay, you may well look astonished! It appears that my people knew your father in early years, before he took up his present specialty, and that he attended my mother, who has never had anything like decent health. She grew so accustomed to him that she would never see anyone else; and Dr. Wainwright has been good enough, since they have been here, to come down two or three times a year, and look after her."

"And he has seen Miss Derinzy?"

"Oh yes; unprofessionally, of course—at dinner, and that kind of thing—and, as I understand, has gone in to make himself very agreeable to Annette, but has never succeeded. On the contrary."

"On the contrary?"

"Well, they tell me that she has always snubbed him tremendously; and that must have been a frightful blow to such a society swell as your governor—diner-out, and *raconteur*, and all that kind of thing. Fact of the matter is, she has a deuced bad provincial style about her."

"Upon my honour I can't see it, can't allow it, even though, as you say, she did snub my father."

"Of course not, you old muff! Antony, no doubt, thought Cleopatra's manners charming; though the 'dull cold-blooded Cæsar' who wouldn't be hooked in, and the other gents whom Antony cut out, had not a good word for her. However, look here; this scheme won't do at all. Don't you see that?"

"What scheme?"

"Now, 'pon my word, I call this nice! I fire guns for help, ring an alarm-bell for aid, and when the aid comes I have to explain my case! Don't you recollect what I told you about my mother's plan for my marrying Annette?"

"Oh—yes," said George Wainwright slowly, "I recollect now."

"That's deuced kind of you. So you must see it would never do."

"It would not do?"

"No, of course it wouldn't! What a fellow you are, George!" said Paul, almost testily. "The girl does not suit me in the smallest degree, and—and there's another one that does."

"Ah, I had forgotten about that."

"My good fellow, you seem to have left your wits behind you at the office for Billy Dunlop to take care of. What the deuce are you mooning about?"

"Nothing; I was only a little confused for the moment.

And you are still over head and ears in that quarter, my poor Paul?"

"By Jove, you may well say that!"

"You correspond, of course, during your absence?"

"I've heard from her once or twice."

"And you carry the letters there," touching his friend's breast-pocket. "Ah, I heard a responsive crackling of paper, my poor old Paul."

"Oh, it's all deuced fine for you to talk about 'my poor old Paul,' and all that, but you don't know the party, or even you would be warmed into something like life!"

"Hem!" growled Wainwright, "I don't know about that; though, as you say, I am a little more exacting in my requirements than you. Does she spell Paul with a 'w,' or with a little 'p'?"

"She spells and writes like a lady as she is. What an ass I am to get into a rage! Look here, George, I can't stand this much longer. I must get back to her. It's no good my fooling my time away down here. My mother has brought me down to propose for Annette, and I shall have to tell her perfectly plainly that it can't be done."

"That's why you sent for me," said George Wainwright; "to tell me that you had fully made up your mind in the matter on which you brought me down here to consult me, eh?"

"No, not at all. I wanted to consult you, my dear old man, my best and dearest of old boys; but, you see, the scenes have shifted a little since I wrote. I've seen more of Annette, and seen more plainly that she does not like me, and I don't care for her; and I've had a letter from town which makes me think that the sooner I am back with Daisy, the better."

"With Daisy? that's her name, is it?"

"That's her pet name with me, and—— What, mooning again, eh?"

"No, I wasn't. I was merely thinking about—— Who was that elderly woman who came to the drawing-room door last night and told Miss Derinzy it was bed-time?"

"Oh, that was Annette's servant, who is specially devoted to her—Mrs. Stothard."

"Mrs. Stothard—Miss Derinzy's maid?"

"Well, maid, and nurse, and general attendant. Poor Annette, as I wrote you, is very delicate, and requires constant watching. I should not wonder if the excitement of last night and all your insinuating charming talk, you old rascal, were to have a bad effect, and make her lay up."

"Poor young lady, I sincerely hope not. When did you say my father was here last?"

"I *didn't* say any time; but I believe a few weeks ago. Now let us take a turn, and try and find the governor."

"By all means. I—I suppose Miss Derinzy is not down yet?"

"Villain! you would add to the mischief you caused last night. No. Down! no; not likely to be for hours! Come."

About the time that this conversation was going on in the little breakfast-room, Mrs. Stothard might have been seen leaving the suite of apartments which she and her young mistress occupied, all the doors of which she carefully closed behind her, and making her way to Mrs. Derinzy's room. Arrived there, she gave a short knock—by no means a humble petitioning rap, but a sort of knock which said, "I only do this kind of thing because I am obliged"—and, following close on the sound of her knuckles, entered.

As Mrs. Stothard had previously noticed—for nothing escaped her—Mrs. Derinzy for the last few days had been very much "out o' sorts," in the language of the villagers. Those humble souls anticipated the immediate advent of another attack, and Mrs. Powler had even suggested to Dr. Barton that the "man in Lunnon," as she called Dr. Wainwright, should be sent for. But when the little village medico presented himself at the Tower with the view of making a few preliminary inquiries, he only saw Mrs. Stothard, who told him, with an amount of grimness and acidity unusual even in her, that his services were not required.

The fact was, that Mrs. Derinzy, though to a certain extent a strong-minded woman, had confined herself for many years to diplomacy; and while plotting and scheming, had forgotten the

actual art of war as practised by her in early days. Now, when the time had arrived for her to descend again into the arena, her courage failed her. It was now that Paul should be induced—forced, if necessary—to take up that position to the preparation of which for him the best years of his mother's life had been devoted, and at this very moment Mrs. Derinzy felt herself unequal to the task. The fact is, she had been winding herself up for the struggle, and was now rapidly running down before it commenced, although—perhaps because—she had her suspicions as to the result.

"How do you find yourself this morning?" asked Mrs. Stothard, in a loud unsympathetic voice.

"Not at all well, Martha. You might guess that from finding me still in my room at this time; but the fact is, I had scarcely the energy to get up this morning."

"Tired out by the wild dissipation of having a fresh face to look at, a fresh tongue to listen to, last night, I suppose."

"You mean Mr. Wainwright? He certainly is a most agreeable man."

"You are not the only person this morning suffering from his charms," said Mrs. Stothard, with a sniff of depreciation as she pronounced the last words.

"What do you mean? How is Annette? What kind of a night did she have?"

"Bad enough. Oh no, nothing violent, but bad enough for all that. I don't think I ever saw her so excited, so pleasantly excited, before. I could not persuade her to go to bed; and she coaxed me to let her sit up while she talked to me of your visitor. He was so handsome, so charming, so intelligent, she had never seen anyone like him."

"He made himself very agreeable," said Mrs. Derinzy shortly. She was alarmed at the account of these raptures on Annette's part, which boded no good to her favourite project.

"If she were a responsible being, I should say she was in love," said Mrs. Stothard. "Not that anyone is responsible, under those circumstances," she added: a dim remembrance of a cathedral yard, a pile of illuminated drawings, and a cornet

in the cavalry, seen through a long vista of intervening years, gave her voice a flat and hollow sound.

"In love! stuff! She sees so few new faces that she's amused for the time, that's all. She will have forgotten the man by this morning."

"She *hasn't* forgotten him, though you do say 'stuff!' She had a very restless night, tossing and talking in her sleep and laughing to herself. And this morning, directly she woke, she asked me if George Wainwright was still here; and when I told her yes, laughed and kissed my cheek, and fell asleep again quite satisfied."

"*George* Wainwright, eh?" said Mrs. Derinzy. "She has lost no time in picking up his name."

"She loses no time in picking up anything that interests her. And this Mr. George Wainwright is clever, you say?"

"Very clever, so Paul says; and so he seems."

"And he has come down here on a visit, just to see Mr. Paul?"

"Exactly. Mr. Paul thinks there is nobody like him, and consults him in everything."

"And yet, knowing this," said Mrs. Stothard, drawing nearer and dropping her voice, "you have this man here, and don't seem to see any danger in his coming."

"What do you mean, Martha? I don't comprehend you," said Mrs. Derinzy, showing in her pallid cheeks and wandering hands how she had been taken aback by the suddenness of the question.

"Oh yes, you understand me perfectly, and as you have only chosen to give me half-confidences, I can't speak any plainer. But this I will say, that if you still wish to throw dust in your son's eyes as regards what is the matter with Annette, you have acted with extraordinary folly in permitting this man to come down here. He is no shallow flimsy youth like Mr. Paul—you will excuse my speaking out; it is necessary in such matters—but a clever, shrewd, long-headed man of the world, and one, above all, who is constantly brought into contact with cases such as Annette's. He will see what is the matter with her in the

course of the next interview they have, even if he has not discovered it at once, or at all events the first time she has an attack, and—he will tell his friend."

"They must be kept apart; he must not see her any more."

"Pshaw! that would excite suspicion—his, Paul's, every one's. No; we must think it out quietly, and see what can be done for the best. Meantime, Annette's state is greatly in our favour. She is wonderfully good-tempered and docile, and if she does not get too much excited, we may yet pass it off all well."

"Let her console herself with that idea," said Mrs. Stothard, when she found herself alone in her own room, "if she is weak enough to find consolation in it. Nothing will hide the truth from this man. I saw that in the mere momentary glance I had of him last night. He will detect Annette's madness, and will tax his father with the knowledge of it; and the Doctor, hard though he is, won't be able to deceive his son. And then up blows our fine Derinzy castle into the air! Won't it blow up without that? Wait a minute, and let us just see how matters stand—in regard to *my* plans and *my* future, I mean, not theirs.

"Paul is still madly in love with Fanny. Since he has been here, he has had two letters from her, addressed to him at the 'Lion,' under his assumed name of 'Douglas.' I saw them when they fell from his pocket, as he changed his coat in the hall the other day. So far, so good. Then—this man Wainwright finds out that Annette is mad, and tells Paul. Of course the young fellow declares off at once, only too glad to do so, and Mrs. Derinzy's hopes of the marriage are at an end.

"Would Paul marry Fanny then? If left to himself he would; but Wainwright, who they say has such immense influence over him, would never permit it; would persuade him that he was disgracing himself, talk about unequal alliances, and all that.

"A dangerous man to have for an enemy! What is to be done How is he to be won over? Suppose—suppose he

were to take a fancy to the girl himself, mad as she is—such things have been, and she is certainly fascinated with him—and I were to prove their friend! How would that work out? I think something might be made of it."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE COLONEL'S CORRESPONDENT.

THE pleasant house in Kent at which Colonel Orpington and his daughter are staying is filled with agreeable company. Not merely young men who are out shooting all day in the thick steaming coverts well preserved with pheasants; not merely young women who are in the habit of carrying on perpetual flirtation with the afore-named young men in language intelligible to themselves alone, who look upon the Colonel as rather a fogey, and who, as he confesses himself, bore him immensely, and are very much deteriorated from the youth of his time; but several people of his own age—club-haunting men who began life when he did, and have pursued it much after the same fashion; and ladies who take interest in all the talk and scandal and reminiscences of bygone years.

The house is situated at such a little distance from town—some sixty miles or so—that it is traversed in very little more than an hour by the express train, which (the owner of the house is a director of the railway) can be always stopped by signal at the very small station nearest to it; so that the company is constantly changing, and receiving fresh accessions, the coming guests being welcomed, and the parting guests being speeded, after the ordinary recipe.

But throughout the changes, Colonel Orpington and his daughter are among the company who stay on; both of them

are voted excellent company, for the nights are beginning to grow long now, and the dinner-hour has been fixed at seven instead of eight; and there is a great talk of and preparation for certain amateur theatricals, of which the Colonel, who is an old hand at such matters, is stage-manager and principal director, and in which Miss Orpington is to take a leading part. Much astonishment has been privately exhibited by certain of the assembled people that that restlessness which generally characterised "old O.," as he was familiarly termed amongst them, seemed to have abated during his visit to Harbledown Hall; more especially has a calm come over those horribly troublesome slate-quarries and lead-mines in South Wales, which usually took the Colonel so frequently away from his daughter and his friends. The matter is discussed in the smoking-room late at night, long after the well-preserved Colonel has retired to his rest; and Badger Bobus, who is come down to stay at Harbledown on the first breath of there being any possibility of cub-hunting, thinks that he ought to keep up the reputation which he acquired by his famous saying on the subject; but the Muse is unpropitious, and all that Bobus can find to remark is, that "it is deuced extraordinary."

The long interval which has now elapsed since her father found it necessary to relieve her of his presence does not seem to have had much effect upon Miss Orpington. Truth to tell, whether her revered parent is or is not with her has now become a matter of very small moment with that lady; and when her hostess congratulates herself in supposing that her house must indeed be attractive when that dear Colonel consents to remain there as a fixed star, Miss Orpington merely shrugs her shoulders slightly and expresses no further acquiescence.

Life has gone on in all this Arcadian simplicity for full five weeks, when the appearance of the Colonel at the breakfast-table, blue frock-coated and stiff-collared, instead of in the usual easy garb adopted by him in the country of a morning, shows some intended change in his proceedings. The wags of the household, Badger Bobus and his set, are absent from the

breakfast-table; for there was a heavy billiard-match on the night before, and they were yet sleeping off its effects. Nevertheless the change in the Colonel's costume is not unobserved; but before a delicately-contrived question can be put to extract its meaning, the Colonel himself announces that he has to go to town for a day, and may possibly be prevented from returning that night. Modified expressions of horror from the young ladies and gentlemen about to act in the amateur theatricals, then close impending—fears that everything will go wrong during the manager's absence, and profound distrust of themselves without his suggestions and experience. The Colonel takes these compliments very coolly—is pretty nearly certain to be back that night; and his absence will give them a chance of striking-out any new lights which may occur to them, and which can be tendered for his acceptance on his return. Miss Orpington, when appealed to to persuade her father not to be longer away than is absolutely necessary, meets the matter with her usual shoulder-shrug, and a calm declaration that in those matters she never interferes, and papa always pleases himself.

The Yorkshire baronet with money to whom she is engaged, and who does not put in appearance until after the Colonel's announcement has been made (he was one of the most interested in the billiard-match, and ran Badger Bobus very hard at the last), is really delighted at the news. He and the Colonel get on very well together—they are on the best of terms both as regards present and prospective arrangements; but there is, as Sir George Hawker remarks, something about the "old boy" which did not "G" with his, Sir George's, notions of perfect comfort.

Before the last of the dissipated ones has dropped-in to the dry bacon and leathery toast, the remnants of the haddocks, and the *débris* of the breakfast, the Colonel is driving a dog-cart to the station, where the signal for the express to stop is already flying. The equanimity which the old warrior has sustained in the presence of his friends deserts him a little now when there is no one near him save a stolid-faced groom who is gazing vacantly over the adjacent country. His annoyance

does not vent itself on the horse—he is too good a whip for that—but he "pishes!" and "pshaws!" and is very short and sharp with the groom demanding orders as he leaves his master at the station; and when he has been sucked-up, as it were, into the train, which is again thundering on its townward way, he takes a letter from his pocket, and daintily adjusting his natty double-eyeglass on his nose, reads it through and through.

"This is the infernal nuisance of having to make women allies in matters of this kind," says he softly to himself, laying down the letter and looking out of the window. "They are always doing too much or too little; anything like a *juste milieu* seems to be utterly impossible to them; and I cannot make out from this girl's rodomontade nonsense whether she has not just overstepped her instructions, and so spoiled what promised to be a remarkably pretty little plot. And yet it was the only thing I could do, and she was the only available person. It was a thousand pities that Clarisse was away from town at the moment; for she is not merely thoroughly trustworthy, but always has her wits about her."

When the train arrives in London, the Colonel calls a cab, and is driven to the Beaufort Club, which is still empty and deserted, and where he asks the porter whether certain members, whom he names, had been there lately. Among these names is that of Mr. Derinzy; and on being answered in the negative, he brightens up a little and pursues his way. This time the cabman is directed to drive to the Temple; and at the Temple gates he stops and deposits his fare.

There are symptoms of renewing life among the lawyers, for term-time is coming on. As the Colonel steps down Middle Temple Lane, he passes by long ladders, and has to skip out of the way of the shower of whitewash and water which the painters, standing on them, scatter refreshingly about. It is for Selden Buildings that Colonel Orpington is making; and, arrived in that quiet little nook, where the hum of the many-footed passing up and down Fleet Street sounds only like the distant roar of the sea, he stops before the doorway of No. 5, and after a rapid glance upwards, to assure himself that he is

right, enters the house, and climbs the dingy staircase. The clerks in the attorney's office on the ground-floor seem to be in full swing; but the oak on the first-floor, guarding the chambers where Tocsin, Q.C., gets himself in training for gladiatorial practice, is closed, Tocsin being still away. Arrived at the second-floor, the Colonel pauses to take breath, the ascent having been a little steep. There are two doors, one on either hand, and both are closed. After a moment's breathing space, the Colonel turns to the one on the right, which bears the name of "Mr. John Wilson," and after a short glance round, to see that he is unobserved—it was scarcely worth the trouble, for he was most certain there would be none there to see him—he takes a neat little Bramah-key from his pocket, opens the oak, and entering, closes it carefully behind him. There is nothing in the little hall but a stone filter and a couple of empty champagne bottles. So the Colonel does not linger there, but quickly passing through, opens the door in front of him, and finds himself in a large room dimly lit, by reason of the window-blinds being all pulled down. When these are raised—and to raise them is the Colonel's first proceeding—he looks round him with a shiver, lights a fire, which is already laid in the grate, and carelessly glances round the apartment. Not like a lawyer's rooms these; not like the office of a hardworking attorney, the chambers of a hard-reading, many-brief-getting barrister; not like the chambers of Tocsin, Q.C.—even though Tocsin notoriously goes in for luxury, and affects to be a swell; no litter of many papers here, no big bundles of briefs, no great sheets of parchment, no tin boxes painted with resonant names (in most cases as fictitious as the drawers of Mr. Bob Sawyer's chemist-shop), no legal library bound in calf, no wig-box, no stuff-gown refreshingly dusted with powder hanging up behind the door. Elegant furniture, more like that found in a Mayfair drawing-room than in the purlieus of the Temple: long looking-glasses from floor to ceiling, velvet-covered mantelpiece, china gimcrackery placed here and there, easy-chairs and sofa; no writing-table, but a little davenport of old black oak, a round dining-table capable of seating six persons, a heavy sideboard also in black oak, and a dumb-waiter. Heavy

cloth curtains, relieved by an embroidered border, cover the windows; and on the walls are proofs after Landseer. Thick dust is over all; and as the fire is slow in lighting, the Colonel shivers again as he gives it a vicious poke, and says to himself:

"'Gad! there is a horrible air of banquet-halls deserted, and all that kind of thing, about the place! It must be more than three months since anyone was in it. When was the last time, by-the-way? Oh, when I gave Grenville and Brown and Harriet that supper after the picnic." The fire struggles up a little, but the Colonel still shivers. "I wish I had told that old woman who attends to this place that Mr. Wilson was likely to be here for an hour or two to-day, and wanted his fire lit. I hope my young friend will be punctual. It is better down at Harbledown than at this dreary place; and it wouldn't do for me to show in town—not that there is anybody here to see me, I suppose. Young Derinzy away still—that is good hearing; but what could she have meant by 'things not looking very straight?' Always so confoundedly enigmatical and mysterious in her writing. Perhaps she will be more explicit when we meet face to face." Then, looking at his watch, "Let me see—just two; and I have not time to get any luncheon anywhere; that is to say, if she comes at the hour which I telegraphed to her."

The fire is burning bravely now, and the Colonel is bending over it, rejoicing in its warmth, when he hears a slight tinkling of a bell. He looks up and listens.

"'Gad! I forgot I had closed the oak," he says. "I come here so seldom, that the ways of these places are still strange to me." (Tinkle again.) "That must be my young friend."

He rises leisurely, crosses the hall, and opens the door, and is confronted by a tall young woman, rather flashily dressed, who lifts her veil, and reveals the features of Miss Bella Merton, the clerk at Mr. Kammerer's, the photographer.

"Is Mr. Wilson in, sir?" asked the young lady, with a demure glance.

"He is," said the Colonel; "and delighted to welcome you to his rooms. Come in, my dear young lady; there is no necessity for either of us acting a part now. You are very

punctual, and in matters of business—and ours is entirely a matter of business—that is a very excellent sign."

He led her into the room, pulled an arm-chair opposite the fire, and handed her to it.

"I scarcely know whether I am doing right in coming here, Colonel Orpington," said Bella Merton—"by myself, you know, and alone with a gentleman," she added, as if in reply to his wondering look.

"I mentioned just now that there was no necessity for any nonsense between us, Miss Merton," said the Colonel quietly, "and that we are engaged on what is purely a matter of business. Let us understand each other exactly. You are my agent, my paid agent—I don't wish to hurt your feelings, but in business frankness is everything—to make inquiries and act for me in a certain matter, and you have come here to make me your report. There is no mystery about it so far as you are concerned, except that you are to know me in it as Mr. Wilson; but you will find, my dear Miss Merton, as you grow older, that in many of the most important business transactions in the world the name of the principal is not allowed to transpire. Do I make myself clear?"

Miss Merton, though still young, has plenty of *savoir faire*. She takes her cue at once; lays aside her giggling, demure, and blushing friskiness, and comes to the point.

"Perfectly, Mr. Wilson," she replied. "I received your telegram, and am here obedient to it."

"That is very right, very prompt, and very much to the purpose," says the Colonel. "I ask you to meet me here, because in your note received this morning you seem to intimate that things were not going quite as comfortable as I could wish with our young friend—Fanny, I think you call her. Is not that her name?"

"Yes; Fanny Stafford."

"Very well, then; in future we will always speak of her as Fanny, or Miss Stafford, as occasion may require. Will you be good enough now to enter into farther particulars?"

"Well, you see, Mr. Wilson"—and the girl cannot help smiling as she repeats his name, for Colonel Orpington looks so

utterly unlike any possible Mr. Wilson—"Fanny has grown dull and out of sorts lately; and I cannot help thinking, from some words she has occasionally dropped, that she is anxious to leave Madame Clarisse, and settle herself in life."

"I don't know that I should prove any obstacle to that," says the Colonel; "it would depend, of course, on the manner in which she proposed to settle herself."

"Of course," says the girl, looking at him keenly; "that is just it; and, if I may be excused for saying so, I don't think hers was in your way."

"Very likely not. Please understand you are to say everything and anything that comes into your head and you think relates to the business we have in hand. I imagine, from the hint in your letter, that the gentleman of whom we have spoken, Mr. ——, how do you call him?"

"Mr. Douglas—Paul Douglas."

"Ay, Mr. Douglas—had come to town. On inquiry, I find this is not the case."

"No, but she hears from him constantly; and though she never shows me his letters, I can gather from what she says that there has been something in the last one or two of them which has upset her very much."

"You have not the least idea what this something may be? Do you imagine he proposes to break with her?"

"On the contrary, I think she discovers that his love for her is even deeper than she imagined, and I think that her conscience is reproaching her a little in regard to him."

The Colonel looks up astonished.

"Who can have benefited by any lapse or waywardness of which these conscience-stings can be the result?" he asks. "Not I for one."

"I don't think anyone is benefited by them, Colonel Orpington," says the girl, with a shadow on her face; "I am sure no one has in the way you suggested. What I mean is this, that Fanny is naturally discontented with her position, and anxious for riches, and fine clothes, and a pretty home, and all that. Since I have talked to her about you and the strong

admiration you have for her, and your coming after her photograph and giving Mr. Kammerer the heavy price he asked for it, and constantly speaking to me about her, she has grown more discontented still, I fancy; and we women can generally read each other's minds and guess at each other's ideas, principally from the fact that we are all made use of and played upon in the same way, I imagine. I fancy that Fanny thinks that she has not acted quite fairly towards Paul Douglas since his absence; that all this talk about you has lessened her regard for him, and led her to picture to herself another future than that which she contemplated when he went away, and—— Well, I have rather an idea that there is another disturbing element in the matter."

"'Gad!" says the Colonel, stroking his moustache thoughtfully, "there seems to be quite enough complication as it is. What is it now?"

"I fancy that a young man in her own station of life, bright, active, and industrious, and likely to make a very good position for himself in that station out of which he would never want to move—for he is proud of it, and thoroughly self-reliant—is deeply smitten with Fanny, and that she knows it."

The Colonel looks up relieved.

"I wouldn't give much for this young man's chance, pattern of all the virtues though he may be. I don't think he is much in Miss Stafford's line."

"Perhaps not," says Bella Merton, "nor do I think he would be likely to succeed, if Fanny had not several sides to her character. At all events, whether he succeeds or not, the knowledge that he cares for her, and that he is ready to open a new career for her, has an irritating and upsetting effect upon her just now."

The Colonel lit a cigar during the progress of this dialogue, and sat smoking it thoughtfully.

"Do you happen to know whether Madame Clarisse is in town?" he asks her after a few minutes' pause.

"I think I heard Fanny say that she came back from Paris last week," replies Miss Merton; "yes, I am sure she did; for

I recollect Fanny telling me Madame had said that she might have a holiday, and I wanted her to come away with me to get a change somewhere."

"Quite right of you to throw yourself as much with her as possible; but don't take her away just yet. You have given me most admirable aid, Miss Merton, and have managed this affair with a delicacy and discretion which do you infinite credit, and which I shall never forget. Will you add to your favour?"

"Willingly if I can, Colonel—I mean Mr. Wilson," says Bella, with a blush. "How is it to be done?"

"By getting yourself a dress, or mantle, or something of that new brown colour which has just come into fashion, about which all the ladies are raving, and which I am sure would become you admirably, and by wearing it the next time I have the pleasure of receiving a visit from you," says the Colonel, pressing a bank-note into his visitor's hand. "And now good-bye. Not a word of thanks; I told you at the beginning this was a mere matter of business; I am merely carrying out my words."

"You wish me still to see Fanny, and to let you know anything that may transpire?" asks Bella.

"Certainly; though perhaps I may soon—— However, never mind; write always to the same address, and keep me well informed."

Miss Merton goes tripping through the Temple, in great delight at the crisp little contents of her purse that she has just received from the Colonel, and commanding great tribute of admiration from the attorneys' clerks who catch glimpses of her through the grimy windows behind which they are working; and Colonel Orpington, *alias* Mr. John Wilson, sits with his feet before him on the fender, smoking slowly, and cogitating over all he has heard.

It is dusk in the Temple precincts, though still bright light outside, before he rises from his chair, flings the but-end of his last cigar into the fire, and says to himself:

"Yes, I think that I must now appear on the scene myself, and see how the land lies with my own eyes. I wonder whether young Derinzy has been playing this recent game

from forethought or by accident. Deuced clever move of his if he intended it; but I rather think it was all a chance; such knowledge of life does not come to one until after a great deal of experience, and he is a mere boy as yet. I don't think much of what my young friend just now said about the tradesman, artisan, or whatever the fellow may happen to be, though she seemed to have a notion that he would prove dangerous. However, it will all work out in time, I suppose. I won't stop in town to-night, now there is nothing to be done; the house in Hill Street is all upset, and I will go back to my comfortable quarters at Harbledown, and give those acting people the benefit of my society. John Orpington," he says, looking at himself in the glass over the mantelpiece, "you have come to a time of life when rest is absolutely necessary for you, and you have got too much good sense to ignore the fact; and as to Miss Fanny Stafford, well—*la nuit porte conseil*—I will sleep upon all I have heard, and make up my mind to-morrow morning." And so little excited or flurried is Colonel Orpington by the events of the day, that when the down express is stopped by signal at the little station, the guard, previously charged to look out for him, finds the Colonel deep in slumber over his evening newspaper.

CHAPTER XVII.

WELL MET.

In her light and volatile way, Miss Bella Merton had made what was by no means a wrong estimate of Daisy's state of mind; more especially right was she in her conjecture that Paul Derinzy's absence had had the effect of showing to Daisy the true state of her feelings towards him, and that she found her heart much more complicated than she had believed. She

had been accustomed to those walks in Kensington Gardens, which had become of almost daily occurrence, and she missed them dreadfully. She had been accustomed to the soft words, the tender speeches, to the little pettings and fondlings and delicate attentions which her lover was always paying to her, and in her solitude she hungered after them. True, his letters were all that a girl in her position could desire—full of the kindest phrases and most affectionate reminiscences, full of delight at the past and of hope for the future; only, after all, they were but letters, and Daisy wearied of his absence and longed for his return.

In the dull dead season of the year, when everything was weary and melancholy, when business was at such a stand-still, that she had not even the excitement of her work to carry off her thoughts in another direction, the girl pondered over her lot, and the end of each period of reflection found her heartily sick of it. How long was it to endure? Was this daily slavery to go on for ever? Was she still to live in a garret, to emerge from thence in the early morning to the dull routine of business, to go through the daily toil of showing her employer's wares to the listless customers, of enduring all their vapid impertinences and senseless remarks, to superintend making up the boxes and the sending-off of the parcels, and to return again to the cheerless garret, weary, dispirited, and dead-beat? So that slight glimpse of the promised land which had been accorded to her when she first made up her mind that she would bring Paul's attentions to a definite end, that marriage never to be perfectly realised while he was with her, while she was in the daily habit of meeting him and listening to his impassioned words, that future which she had depicted to herself, seemed now perfectly possible of realisation, although Paul had, as she was compelled to allow to herself, never held out definite hopes of marrying her, but contented himself by dwelling on the impossibility of any decadence in his love, or of his being able to pass his life away from her.

But since his absence in the country, these pleasant visions had gradually faded and grown colourless. Thinking over the past, Daisy was compelled to allow to herself that, though

their acquaintance now extended over some months, the great end to which she was looking forward seemed as far off as ever. Who were those people of his, as he called them? this family of whom he apparently stood in such awe? and even if their consent were obtained, would Paul have courage enough to fly in the face of the world by marrying a girl in a station of life inferior to his own? The moral cowardice on this point she was aware of; his weakness she knew. She had seen it in his avoidance of public places when in her company, and the constant fright of detection which he laboured under. She had taxed him with it, and he could not deny it, but laughed it off as best he might. He even in laughing it off had confessed that he stood in wholesome terror of Mrs. Grundy and all the remarks which she and her compeers might make. Was this a feeling likely to be effaced by time? She thought not. The older he grew the less likely was he to care to defy the world's opinion, unsustained as he would be by the first fierce strength of that love which alone could spur him on to what was, in his eyes, a deed of such daring.

And Daisy was in this position, that, however much she might seem to talk and laugh with Bella Merton, she could not take that young person, nor indeed any person of her own age, into her confidence. All the counsel and advice which she had to rely on must come from her mother alone, and Mrs. Stothard's advice was like herself, grim and very hard and very worldly. From the first she had seemed much pleased with Daisy's account of her relations with Paul. She had urged her daughter to persevere in the course on which she had decided, and to lose no opportunity for making the young man declare himself, so that they might have some legal hold upon him. All this was to be done cautiously and without hurry, so long as he continued as attached as he then seemed to be. Daisy was cautioned against doing anything which might alarm him; it was only if she perceived that he was relaxing in his attentions that she was at once to endeavour to bring him to book.

And though Daisy was fully aware that her more recent letters to her mother, written since Paul's absence, had been

influenced by the dulness which that event had caused her, and were, in truth, anything but reassuring productions, Mrs. Stothard's had never lost heart. They were cheerful and hopeful; bade her daughter not to give way, as she felt certain that all would be right in the end; and were full of a spirit of gaiety which was little characteristic of the writer.

And there were two other influences at work which tended to disturb Daisy's peace of mind. Her acquaintance, Bella Merton, though sufficiently social and volatile, had a singular knack of persistence in carrying through any plan on which she might be engaged; and since the subject was first mentioned at the little party in Augusta Manby's rooms, she had taken advantage of every opportunity of being in Daisy's company, to enlarge to her on Colonel Orpington's position and generosity, and of the extraordinary admiration which he had professed for Fanny's portrait and herself.

These remarks were listened to by Daisy at first with unconcern, and their perpetual iteration would probably have disgusted her, had not Miss Merton been endowed with an unusual amount of feminine tact, and thus enabled to serve them up in a manner which she thought would be peculiarly palatable to her friend; so that Daisy found herself not merely constantly listening to stories of Colonel Orpington when she was in Miss Merton's company, but thinking a great deal of that distinguished individual when she was alone. She had taken very little notice of him on the day when he called in George Street with his daughter, and could only recollect of his personal appearance that it was gentlemanly and distinguished-looking; but she remembered having noticed the keen way in which he looked at her, and one glance of unmistakable admiration which he levelled at her as he followed his daughter from the room. And he was very rich, was he? and very generous—very generous? Why was Bella Merton always harping on his generosity? why was she always talking in a vague way of hoping some day to be able to introduce him formally?

To Daisy there could be no misunderstanding about the purpose of such an introduction, the girl thought, with flaming

cheek; and the recollection of Paul's delicacy came across her, and she felt enraged with herself at ever having permitted Bella Merton to talk to her in that fashion. And yet—and yet what was the remainder of her life to be, Paul making no sign? She knew perfectly well that that little tea-party in Dalston might, in another way, take rank as an epoch in her life. She knew perfectly well that John Merton, who had always admired her, that night had yielded up his heart, and she would not have been surprised any day at receiving an offer of his hand. Was that to be the end of it? Was she to pull down the image of Paul which she worshipped so fondly, and erect that of homely John Merton in its place? Was she to continue in very much the same style of life which she was then leading, merely exchanging her garret for a room a little less high, a little better furnished, but probably in a less desirable part of the town? Was she to remain as a drudge—not indeed to Madame Clarisse or any other employer, for she knew John Merton was too high-spirited to think of allowing her to help towards their mutual maintenance by her own labour—but still as a drudge in domestic duties, in slavery for children and household, never to rise in the social scale, never to know anything of those luxuries which she so longed for? It was a bitter, bitter trial, and the more Daisy thought it over—and the question was constantly present in her mind—the less chance did she see of bringing it to a satisfactory conclusion.

Although the professional people whose duties required their attendance in town were beginning to come back, and bringing with them, of course, their wives and families, the majority of Madame Clarisse's more happily placed-customers yet remained in their country houses, and there was still very little business doing at the establishment in George Street. There were frequently times in the day when Daisy had nothing to do, and she would take advantage of her leisure to go out and get a breath of the bleak autumnal air. Madame Clarisse never objected to these little excursions; indeed, encouraged them. For on her return from France, she had noticed that her favourite Fanfan's cheeks were looking very pale, and that

her manner was listless and dispirited, and that she plainly wanted a change. Madame was at first disposed to insist on Fanfan's going away for a time to the country or the seaside, and recruiting herself amid fresh scenes. But a communication which she received about that period altered her views; and she consequently contented herself by giving her assistant as many hours' leisure as she conveniently could, taking care that this leisure was fragmentary, and never to be enjoyed for longer than one afternoon at a time.

Daisy had an odd delight, when thus enabled to absent herself from her duties, in visiting the old spot in Kensington Gardens, which had been the scene of her walks with Paul. They had selected it on account of its seclusion, but now there were fewer people there than ever; it was too damp and cold any longer to be used as a place of recreation by the children who formerly frequented it for its quietude and its shade; and an occasional workman hurrying across the Park, or a keeper, finding his occupation gone in the absence of the boys, gazing wearily down the long vistas at the end of which the thick white fog was already beginning to steam, were the only human creatures whom Daisy encountered.

She was astonished, therefore, one day on arriving at the end of the well-known avenue, and turning to retrace her steps, to find herself face to face with a gentleman who must evidently have made his approach under cover of the trees, and who was close to her before she had heard his footfall.

She recognised him in an instant—Colonel Orpington.

"I must ask your pardon for intruding on you, Miss Stafford," said the Colonel, raising his hat, "and more especially for having come upon you so suddenly, and caused, as I am afraid I see by your startled looks, some annoyance; but though I have never had the pleasure of a personal introduction, we have met before, and I believe you know who I am."

His manner was perfectly easy and gentlemanly, but thoroughly respectful withal; and though, as he had noticed, Daisy's first impulse was to turn aside and leave him without a word, a moment's reflection caused her to bow and say:

"I believe I recognise Colonel Orpington."

"Exactly; and in Colonel Orpington you see an unfortunate man who is compelled, from what the begging-letter writers call in their flowery language, 'circumstances over which he has no control,' to remain in London at this horribly dismal time of year."

Daisy was silent, but she smiled; and the Colonel proceeded:

"I wandered into the Park and strolled up the Row, where there were only three men, who were apparently endeavouring to see which could hold on to their horses longest; and I was comparing the ghastliness of to-day with the glory of last season—I need not quote to you, I am sure, my dear Miss Stafford, that charming notion about a 'sorrow's crown of sorrows,' which Mr. Tennyson so cleverly copied from Mr. Dante, who thought of it first—when at the far end by the Serpentine Bridge I got a glimpse of a form which I thought I recognised, and which, if I may say so, has never been absent from my mind since I first saw it. I made bold to follow it; and just now, on your turning round, I found I was right in my conjectures. It was you."

He paused; but Daisy did not smile now, merely bowed stiffly, and moved as though she would proceed. The Colonel moved at the same time.

"I hope you are not annoyed at my freedom, Miss Stafford," said he. "Believe me, at the smallest hint from you, I will rid you of my presence this instant; but it does seem rather ridiculous that two persons who, I think we are not flattering in saying, are calculated to amuse one another at a time and in a place where they are as much alone as the grand old gardener and his wife were in Paradise, should avoid each other in an eminently British manner, simply because conventionality does not recognise their meeting."

This time Daisy smiled, almost laughed, as she said: "You will readily understand, Colonel Orpington, that the rules of society have no great hold upon me, who have never been in any position to be bound by them; and I haven't the least objection to your walking part of the way with me on my return to my employer's, if it at all pleases or amuses you to do so."

"It would give me the very greatest pleasure," said the Colonel; and they walked on together.

As Daisy looked up for an instant at the face of her companion and thought of Paul, she could not help wondering at the contrast between the two men: he with whom she had been in the habit of walking up and down that avenue was always so thoroughly in earnest, his head bent down in fond solicitude towards her, his eyes seeking hers, every tone of his voice, every movement of his hands showing how deeply interested he was in that one subject on which alone they talked; while her present companion, though probably fully double Paul's age, walked along gaily and blithely, his head erect, and his voice and manner as light as his conversation.

"This is really charming," said the Colonel. "I had not the least idea of so pleasant an interview in my dull, dreary day. There is literally not one soul in London of my acquaintance, except yourself, Miss Stafford; and do you know, on reflection, I am rather glad of it."

"Indeed! And why, Colonel Orpington?"

"Because, don't you know, they say that people who in the whirl of the season might be constantly coming into momentary contact, and then carried away off somewhere else, never have the slightest opportunity of really becoming acquainted with each other; whereas, when people are thrown together at this time of year and this kind of way, there is a chance of their discovering each other's best qualities, and thus establishing an intimacy."

Daisy laughed again—this time a rather hard, bitter laugh.

"You forget, Colonel Orpington, you are talking to me now as though I am one whom you are likely to meet in the whirl of the season, one with whom you are likely to become on intimate terms."

The Colonel looked grave. "I am thinking that you have the manners, the appearance, and the education of a lady, Miss Stafford; you could have nothing more," said he quietly. "And now, where are you bound for?"

"I am going back to my employer's in George Street."

"Ah, Madame Clarisse's, where I had first the pleasure of

seeing you. And does that still go on, Miss Stafford, every day —that same work in which I saw you engaged?"

"Exactly the same, day after day," said Daisy, with a little sigh; "a little less of it now, a little more of it another time, but always the same."

"'Gad, it must be dull," said the Colonel, pulling down the corners of his mouth, "having to show a lot of gowns and things to pert young misses and horrible old women, and listen to their wretched jargon. Don't you sometimes feel inclined to tell them plainly what frights they are, and how the fault, when they find fault, is not in the thing—cap, ribbon, shawl, or whatever it may be—which they are trying on, but in themselves?"

"Madame Clarisse would scarcely thank me for that, I think," said Daisy; "and I should rather repent my own folly when I found myself without employment, and without recommendation necessary for getting it."

"Yes, of course, you are right," said the Colonel, "it would not do; but the temptation must be awfully strong. I was thinking after I left Clarisse's the other day, how astonished the hideous creatures who go there must be when they find that the things which look so charming on you when you were showing them off, so entirely lost their charm when sent home to the persons who have purchased them. Like a fairy tale, by Jove!" As he said this, Colonel Orpington cast a momentary glance at his companion to see what effect his remarks had produced, and was pleased to find that Daisy looked gratified. The next moment her countenance clouded as she said:

"It is not a very ennobling position, that of being an animated block for showing the effect of milliner's wares, but I suppose there are worse in the world."

"Of course there are, my dear Miss Stafford; many worse, and a great many better. It would be a dreary look-out, though, if you had no brighter future in store for you."

"It is a dreary look-out, then," said the girl, almost solemnly.

"Don't say that," said the Colonel, moving a little closer towards her, and slightly lowering his voice; "you mustn't

talk in that manner; you are depressed by the dull time, and the day, and this charming fog which is now rising steadily around us. You don't imagine, I suppose, that the rest of your life is to be spent at Madame Clarisse's?"

"At Madame Clarisse's, or Madame Augustine's, or Madame somebody else's, I suppose," said Daisy.

"But have you no idea of setting-up in business for yourself?" asked the Colonel. "It would not be any great position, but at all events it would be better than this. At any time, I imagine, it is more pleasant to drive than be driven."

"I have never thought of it," said the girl; "the chance is so very remote, it does not do to look forward. I find it is better to go on simply from day to day, taking it all as it comes," said Daisy, with a short laugh.

"Now, my dear Miss Stafford, you really must not speak in that way. I must take advantage of my being, unfortunately, a great deal older than you, and having seen a great deal more of the world, to give you a little advice, and to talk seriously to you. You are far too young, and, permit me to add, far too beautiful, to hold such gloomy and desponding views. From the little I have already had the pleasure of seeing of you, I should say you were eminently calculated by the charm—well, the charm of your appearance—for there is no denying that with us ordinary denizens of the world, who are not philosophers, a charming appearance goes a long way—and of your manners, you are eminently calculated to make friends who would only be delighted at an opportunity of serving you."

"Such has not been my experience at present," said the girl. "I am afraid that your desire to be polite has led you into error, Colonel Orpington; I find no such friends as you describe."

"I was mistaken," said the Colonel; "I thought there must be at least one person who would have done anything for you."

As he said these words, he looked sharply at her; and though Daisy's eyes were downcast, she noticed the glance, and felt that she blushed under it.

"However, be that as it may," said the Colonel, "it will be my care to see that you are unable to make that assertion

henceforth. Believe me, that this day you have made a friend whose greatest delight will be in forwarding your every wish."

He dropped his voice as he said these words, and let his hand for an instant rest lightly on hers.

"You are very kind," she said, "and I know I ought to be very grateful—I ought."

"You ought not to say another word, Miss Stafford," said the Colonel. "When you are a little older and a little more experienced, you will know that there is nothing more foolish than to be too ready with your gratitude. Wait and see what comes. Think over what I have said, and settle in your own mind in what way I can be of service to you; and don't be angry with me for saying that you must not be afraid to take me literally at my word. Fortune, who is so hard upon many excellent and deserving people, has been especially kind to me, who don't deserve anything at all, and I have much more money than I can spend upon myself. Think over all I have said, and let me look forward to the pleasure of seeing you in the same spot again to-morrow afternoon. Now I will intrude upon you no longer. Good-bye."

He touched her hand, took off his hat, and before Daisy could speak a word, he had left her, and was retracing his steps across the Park.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SOUNDINGS.

CAPTAIN DERINZY did not experience so much satisfaction as he had anticipated from Mr. George Wainwright's visit to the Tower. On the first night of his arrival, his guest had listened to him with the greatest patience and apparent delight. The Captain had told all his old stories, repeated his *bon mots*—

which were very brilliant some dozen years before, but had lost a little of their glitter and piquancy—and had aired the two subjects on which he was strongest—his delight in London life, and his disgust at the place in which he was then compelled to vegetate—to his own entire satisfaction.

He had hoped for frequent renewals of these pleasant confabulations during George Wainwright's stay; but the next morning Paul told his father that he and his friend had matters of business to talk over; and although George seemed willing, and even anxious, to give up portions of his time occasionally to his host, he was so much in requisition by Paul, by Annette, and even by Mrs. Stothard, that the poor Captain found himself left as much as usual to his own devices, and wandered about the beach and the cliffs, cursing his fate and his exile as loudly as ever. But while he was thus excluded from the general councils, a series of explanations seemed to be going on among the other members of the household.

"I want to speak to you, Martha," said Mrs. Derinzy, on the afternoon of the day after the conversation last recorded had taken place. "I have been thinking over what you said this morning, and I want you to be more explicit about it."

"About what portion of it?" asked Mrs. Stothard.

"Well, about all; but more particularly what you said about my only having chosen to give you half confidences. What did you mean by that?"

"Exactly what I said. You're a clever woman, Mrs. Derinzy, but you have made a great mistake in imagining that you could make me a fellow-conspirator with you in a plot——"

"Conspirator! plot!" cried Mrs. Derinzy, interrupting.

"Exactly. A fellow-conspirator in a plot," said Mrs. Stothard calmly—"I use the words advisedly—and yet only tell me a portion of your intentions."

"Will you be good enough to explain yourself, Mrs. Stothard?" said Mrs. Derinzy, seating herself, and thereby asserting her superiority in the only way possible over her servant, who knew so much, and was apparently inclined to make a dangerous use of her knowledge.

"Certainly," said Mrs. Stothard. "I am the only person in

this place, besides you and your husband, who knows that your niece Annette Derinzy is subject to fits of lunacy. I say who *knows* it; it may be suspected more or less, though I don't think it is much. But I know it. The fact is kept sedulously by you from all who are likely to be brought in contact save the one physician who attends, and his visits are accounted for by a pretext that you, and not Annette, are his patient. If that is not a plot in which we are fellow-conspirators, I should like to know what is."

"Go on," said Mrs. Derinzy, in a low voice.

"I am going on," said Mrs. Stothard, pitilessly. "The reason for your concealing the fact that this girl is an occasional lunatic is, that she is the heiress of a very large fortune, and that since the day on which you first heard of her inheritance you determined that she should marry your only son. For my discovery of this portion of the plot, I am not indebted to you. It was the work entirely of my own observation. You can say whether I am right in my conjecture or not."

"Suppose you are, what then?"

"Suppose I am! What is the use of beating about the bush in this absurd way any longer? You know I am right. Now that you see the difficulty of blinding your son any longer to his cousin's condition, and that he is not weak enough to have been played upon to any extent, had it not been for the influence which this newly-arrived friend has over him, you find that you require my aid, and want my advice."

Perhaps for the first time in her long scheming anxious life, Mrs. Derinzy felt herself thoroughly prostrate. She hid her face in her hands, and when she raised it, tears were streaming down her cheeks. She made no further attempt at concealment of her feelings, but murmured piteously, "What are we to do Martha—what are we to do?"

Mrs. Stothard's hard face softened for a moment as she stepped towards her, and touched her gently with her hand.

"What are you to do!" she cried. "Not to give way like this, and throw up all chance of winning the battle after so long and desperate a fight. Let us think it over quietly, see exactly how matters stand, and determine what can be done for the best."

"He must never know it, Martha—he must never know it!" murmured Mrs. Derinzy.

"Who must never know what?" asked Mrs. Stothard, shortly.

"Paul must never know that Annette is mad. If he finds it out, of course all hope of his marrying her is at an end. And what will he think of me for having deceived him?—of me, his mother, who did it all for his good."

"You must be rational, or it will be impossible to decide upon anything," said Mrs. Stothard, who had relapsed into her grim state. "As to Paul's not knowing, that is sheer nonsense. I told you long ago, it was very unadvisable to have him down here at all. But he is not very observant, and with proper care might have been easily gulled. The girl was getting better, too—that is to say, there was a longer interval between her attacks, and the matter might possibly have been arranged. Now that Mr. George Wainwright has seen her, and is an inmate of the same house with her, that hope is entirely at an end."

"You think so, Martha?"

"I am certain of it."

"Then all my self-sacrifice, all my anxieties and schemings have been thrown away, and I have no further care for life," said Mrs. Derinzy, again bursting into tears.

"You are relapsing into silliness again. Suppose Paul were told of his cousin's illness, do you think he would definitely refuse to marry her?"

"Instantly and for ever," said Mrs. Derinzy.

"What! if the fact were notified by George Wainwright, who at the same time hinted that though Annette had been insane, her disease was much decreased in violence and frequency during the last few years, and in the next few might possibly cease altogether? Would Paul, hearing all this, and urged on by you, give up his notion of the fortune he would enjoy with his wife—Paul, who is, as I have heard say, so fond of pleasure and enjoyment, so imbued with a passion for spending money?"

She paused, and Mrs. Derinzy looked at her in astonishment, then said:

"Paul is weak and frivolous, but is no fool; he will not believe it."

"Not if it is told him by his friend who has such influence over him, and on whose integrity he relies so thoroughly?—not if it is told him by Dr. Wainwright's son?"

"He might if it were told him by Dr. Wainwright himself," said Mrs. Derinzy, hesitating.

"And don't you think that George Wainwright has sufficient influence with his father to make him do as he wishes?" asked Mrs. Stothard.

"Has anyone sufficient influence with George Wainwright to make him help in our scheme?"

"Time will show," said Mrs. Stothard. "Now that we understand each other, I think you had better leave this affair wholly in my hands. You know me well enough to be certain that I shall do my best to serve you."

"That was the best way to settle it," said Mrs. Stothard to herself as she walked towards her own room. "It was necessary to face it out—it would have been impossible to make her believe that Paul could have been kept in ignorance of the secret. And yet she is weak enough to think a man like George Wainwright would suffer himself to take part in such a wretched scheme as this, and compromise his own honour and his friend's happiness! However, it will amuse her, and give me time to mature my own plans. I rather think the notion that I hit on this morning will be the best one to work out after all; the best one, that is to say, for all I care—for Fanny and myself. Ah, who is this coming in from the garden? 'Tis Mr. Wainwright. I wonder what he thinks of me; his look last night was anything but flattering; now we shall see. Good-morning, sir."

"Good-morning to you, nurse; how is your charge this morning?"

"My charge? Oh, you mean Miss Annette. She's very well indeed; I think she seems to have benefited very much by the change which the arrival of company has brought to the house."

"Company! Mr. Paul can scarcely be considered

company in his own home, and I fear I am not much company."

"It doesn't sound very flattering, Mr. Wainwright; but the mere sight of a fresh face does us good in this dull place. I always tell Mrs. Derinzy that my young lady wants rousing; and I am sure I am right, for it is a long time since I have seen her look so bright as she does this morning."

"I am sure you are not sufficiently selfish as to keep all her brightness to yourself, nurse," said George; "but I do not think Miss Derinzy has yet left her room."

"I am going to her now," said Mrs. Stothard, "to persuade her to take a turn in the grounds before luncheon; if I may say you will accompany her, Mr. Wainwright, I am sure she will come at once."

"You may say that I will do so with the very greatest pleasure," said George; and then, after Mrs. Stothard had left him, "A clever woman that, and, if my ideas are correct, just the sort of person for that place. What a wonderful position for them all down here, and how extraordinarily well the secret has been preserved! The girl has a singular charm about her, and yet Paul will be delighted at getting—as I have very little doubt he will get—his release. Fancy wishing to be released from—— What can have made that woman so civil to me this morning? I thought I came down here for quiet, and I find that I must not move or speak without previously exercising the most tremendous caution. Ah, here is Miss Annette; how pretty and fresh she looks!"

She did look wonderfully pretty in her tight-fitting violet-cashmere dress, made high round her throat, with a small neat white collar and cuffs, and with a violet ribbon in her hair. Her eyes were bright, and her manner was frank and free as she walked straight up to George Wainwright, and holding out her hand, gave him good-morning.

"Good-morning, Miss Derinzy," said George; "you are late in coming among us. I was just asking your servant what had become of you."

"My servant! Oh, you mean Mrs. Stothard. Have you

been talking to that horrid woman? What has she been saying to you?"

"You mustn't call her a horrid woman; she has been speaking very nicely of you, and said she would send you to take a turn in the grounds with me; so I don't think her a horrid woman, of course."

"She is a horrid woman, all the same," said Annette, "and I hate her; though I shall like taking a turn in the grounds with you. Let us come out at once. What a lovely morning!"

"Yes," said George, as they stood on the steps, "but not lovely enough for you to come out without a hat; the air is anything but warm."

"It strikes cold to you Londoners," said Annette, laughing; and as she laughed, her eyes sparkled and her colour came, and George could not help thinking how remarkably pretty she looked; "but I do not feel it one bit too fresh; I hate having anything on my head."

"Do you never wear a hat?"

"Only when I go into the village with Mrs. Derinzy, never here in the grounds. I hate anything that weighs on my head or gives me any sense of oppression there; always when I feel my head hot I think I am going to be ill."

"Ay, I was sorry to hear that you were so frequently an invalid," said George.

"Yes," said the girl, "I often think the house, instead of the Tower, should be called the Hospital. Mrs. Derinzy, you know, is very often ill; so ill sometimes, that Dr. Wainwright has to come from London to see her."

"So I have heard," said George. "Do you know my father?"

"I have seen him very often when he has been down here to visit my aunt."

"He has never attended you, I suppose, Miss Derinzy?" asked George, looking at her closely.

"Dr. Wainwright attend me! Oh dear, no," said Annette; "there was never any occasion for his doing so."

"Like most unselfish people, you make light of your own troubles," said George, "and exaggerate those of other people."

"No, indeed," said Annette; "my ailments are trifles compared with those of Mrs. Derinzy."

"How do you feel when you are ill?" asked George.

"What a curious man you are? what curious questions you ask! Why do you take any interest in me and my ailments?"

"In you, because—well, I can only say that I find you very interesting," said George, with a smile; "and in your illness because I am a doctor's son, you know, and understand something of a doctor's work."

"Well, I can scarcely call mine illnesses," said the girl; "for such as they are, I and Mrs. Stothard—the woman you were just talking to—manage them between us. I feel a sort of heavy burning sensation in my brain, a buzzing in my ears, and a dimness of sight, and then I faint away, and I know of nothing that happens, how the time goes by, or what is said or done around me, until I come to myself, and feel, oh, so horribly weak and tired!"

"I told you you spoke too lightly of your own ailments, Miss Derinzy," said George, with an earnest, passionate look; "and this account of what you suffer seems to give me the idea that you require more skilled treatment than can be afforded by Mrs. Stothard, kind though she may be."

"I didn't say she was kind," said the girl sullenly; "I hate her!"

"Has my father never prescribed for you in one of these attacks?"

"Never; and never shall!"

"I hope you don't hate him too?" asked George with a smile.

"I—I don't like him."

"May I ask why not?"

"I—I can't tell; but his prescribing for me would be of no use, he could do me no good."

"How can you tell that?"

"Because he has happened to come down here by chance to see my aunt when I have been ill, and of course if he could have cured me, they would have asked him to do so."

"Of course," said George. He looked at her steadily, but could glean nothing from the expression on her face, and he changed the subject. "You haven't seen Paul this morning?"

"No, I see very little of him. Before he came down, my aunt talked so much to me about his visit, and said he was so amusing and so delightful, and that I should be so much pleased with him."

"Well?"

"Now you are asking me questions again. I intended to make you tell me all about London and what the people do there; and we have been out here for half an hour, and talked about nothing but myself. What did you mean by 'Well'?" she added laughing.

George laughed too.

"I meant, and you found all Mrs. Derinzy's anticipations realised?"

"Not the least in the world. I don't find my cousin amusing, and I am sure he doesn't talk much; he walks about smoking a pipe and smoothing his moustache with his fingers; and whenever one speaks to him, his thoughts seem to be a long way off, and he has to call them back before he answers you. I told my aunt he was like those people you read of in books, who are in love."

"What did she say to that?"

"She smiled, and said she had noticed the same since Paul had been down here, and that very likely that might be the reason."

"You must not be hard on Paul," said George Wainwright, at the same time frowning slightly; "if you knew him as well as I do, you would think him the best fellow in the world."

"I find that that is what is always said of people whom I don't care about," said Annette, quietly.

"My father, for instance," said George, with a laugh, "and Mrs. Stothard."

"Of Dr. Wainwright, certainly," said Annette. "My aunt and uncle are never tired of proclaiming his praises; and my aunt has reasons, for I believe it is to his skill that my aunt owes her life; but I never heard anyone say anything good of Mrs. Stothard."

"Poor Mrs. Stothard," said George. "She will most likely—— Ah, here is the Captain."

The gentleman strolling up the little white path which led over the cliff to the sea was indeed Captain Derinzy, limping along and slashing at the bushes with his cane in his usual military manner. He looked very much astonished at seeing Annette walking with his guest, and did not disguise his surprise.

"Hallo!" he said, "you out here! Seldom you come out into the open air, isn't it?—Be much better for her if she came out oftener, wouldn't it, Wainwright? This is the stuff that they talk about in this country life. Why, in London a girl goes out and rides in the Row twice a-day, and walks and rides in Bond Street, and all that kind of thing, and get's plenty of exercise, don't you know? Whereas in the country it is so infernally dirty, and the roads are all so shamefully bad, and there are such a set of roughs about—tramps and that kind of people—that girls don't like going out; and yet they tell you that the country is more healthy than London! All dam stuff!"

"Well, Miss Derinzy's looks certainly do credit to the country, though I regret to hear that they are not thoroughly to be relied on. She has been telling me she suffers a great deal from illness."

"Oh, has she?" said the Captain, looking up nervously; "the deuce she has! Look here, Netty, don't you think you had better go in and dress yourself for dinner, and that kind of thing? It is quite cold now, and you haven't got any hat, and your aunt might make a row—I mean, mightn't like it, you know. Run in, there's a good girl; we shall all be in soon.—Don't you go, Wainwright; I want to show you a view from the

top of that hill—the Beacon Hill, they call it ; it's about the only thing worth seeing in the whole infernal place."

When Captain Derinzy went in to dress for dinner, he said to his wife :

"It is a deuced good thing that I am a long-headed fellow and have my wits about me, and all that kind of thing. I found this young Wainwright walking with Annette, and he told me she had been telling him about her illness and all that. So I thought it best to separate 'em at once ; and I sent her off into the house, and took him away to the Beacon Hill, though he seemed to me to be wanting to go after her all the time."

CHAPTER XIX.

TWO IN PURSUIT.

THE festivities of Harbledown Hall were at an end, the amateur theatricals had been given—to the great delight of those performing in them, and to the excessive misery of those witnessing them—on two successive nights : the first to the invited neighbouring gentry, the second to the tenantry and servants. The guests were dispersed to various other country houses, and among them Miss Orpington and her father had taken their departure ; but not to the same destination : the young lady, under the chaperonage of her aunt, was going to stay with some people, the head of whose family was an eminent tea-broker in the City, who, some years before, would not have been received into what is called society, but who was now so enormously rich that society found it could not possibly do without him. Society dined with him and danced with him at his house in Hyde Park Gardens, invited his wife and his

daughter to all sorts of entertainments during the season, voted his two ugly dumpy sons the pleasantest fellows in Europe, and went regularly to stay with him during the autumn at his most charming country place at Brookside near Hastings.

As an acknowledgment of all these kindnesses the tea-broker had caused himself to be put into Parliament, and took his place with tolerable punctuality amongst the conscript fathers, never failing in obedience to the suggestions of the whip of his party, and, when he was not in the smoking-room, sleeping the sleep of the righteous on the back benches of the House.

The party at Brookside promised this year to be a particularly agreeable one; and as Miss Orpington had arranged for an introduction with the Yorkshire baronet with money, and that gentleman saw his way to unlimited sport during the day and unlimited flirtation during the evening, they agreed to console themselves even for the absence of the young lady's papa.

For Colonel Orpington was not going to Brookside. His daughter, as he said, had her aunt to look after her, and her intended to amuse her; and though there was nothing to be said against Skegby—that being the name of the tea-broker—who was a very good fellow, a self-made man, honour to British commerce, and that kind of thing, and was received everywhere, yet there were some people going to Brookside that the Colonel didn't care about meeting; and so, as the house in Hill Street was ready, he should go and take up his quarters there for a time—at all events until he had occasion to inspect the works and quarries in South Wales.

All his friends being still away from London, it was natural that the Colonel should seek for consolation in the resources of that new acquaintance which he had so recently made. He had met Fanny Stafford several times in the Park, and she had so far relaxed from her rigid formality as to accept two or three little dinners from him, as good as his taste could command and Verrey could supply, at which Madame Clarisse was always present.

That worthy lady's interest in her assistant seemed to have increased very much since her return from Paris. She was always insisting on Fanny's taking half-holidays, giving up work now and again, and coming into her private rooms for a meal and a chat; and in that chat, which was entirely one-sided and carried on solely by Madame Clarisse, the theme was always the same—the misery of work and poverty, the glory of idleness and riches, the folly, the worse than folly, almost crime, of those who spend their life in toil, and neglect to clutch the golden opportunity which comes to most all of us when we are young, and comes but once.

With these remarks—which might have seemed sententious in anyone else, but which Madame Clarisse put so aptly and so deftly, with such quaint illustrations, sounding quainter still in the broken English with which she interlarded her discourse, as to render it amusing—was often mixed a series of running comments on Colonel Orpington, which were laudatory, but in which the praise was laid on with a very skilful hand.

It is due to the Colonel to say that he left all mention of himself, whether laudatory or otherwise, to Madame Clarisse, and this was one of the greatest reasons for which Daisy liked him.

Beyond referring occasionally to his originally expressed desire to see the girl removed into some better position than that which she then occupied, and his readiness to help her in the achievement of such a position, Colonel Orpington never seemed to have any object in his never-failing pursuit of the girl's acquaintance beyond the perfectly legitimate one of amusing himself and her, and making the time pass pleasantly for them both. He was always gay, always cheerful, always full of good-humoured talk and anecdote, but at the same time always strictly respectful and well-bred in his conversation and in his manner. He treated the milliner's assistant with as much courtesy as he would bestow upon a duchess; and it was only in his occasional colloquies with Madame Clarisse that he permitted himself the use of phrases which but few of his compatriots would have understood, and which even in France

would have been more easily intelligible in the Rue de Bréda than in the Faubourg St. Germain.

And what were Daisy's feelings towards Colonel Orpington? Did she really love or care for him? Not one whit.

Had she forgotten Paul and all their long walks and talks, all the devotion which he had proffered her, all her acknowledgments of regard for him? Had his image faded out of her heart during his absence, and was it there replaced by another and less worthy one? Not the least in the world; only that the absence of her lover had given the girl breathing space, as it were, to look around her, and to estimate her present position and her future chances at their actual value. And when thus seriously estimated, she found that the devotion which Paul had proffered her was, to her thinking, not worth very much; it was not sufficient to induce him to pledge himself to marry her: it was not sufficient to induce him boldly to defy the opinion of the world, and break off those shackles of family and society by which he was bound hand and foot; it was only sufficient for him to give up a certain portion of his time to be passed in her company, which was after all a sufficiently selfish pleasure, as it pleased him as much as it did her. And then, after all, what was to be the result?

In the early days of their acquaintance, before he knew the character of the girl he had to deal with, Paul had given certain hints which Daisy had rigidly ignored, or when compelled to hear them, had forbidden to be repeated; but since then they had been going on in a vague purposeless way; and though the boy-and-girl attachment, the stolen meetings, the letters, and the knowledge that they loved each other, were in themselves sufficient, and would last for ever, due consideration gave Daisy no clue to the probable result of that connection. And yet she loved Paul; had no idea how much she loved him until she was thinking over what her future, what a portion of her future at least, might be if passed with somebody else.

If passed with somebody else? There could be no doubt about what was intended, though he had never said a word, or given the slightest hint. The conversation of her employer—

who, as Daisy was clear-headed and keen-witted enough to see, was in the Colonel's confidence—was full of subtle meaning. No need for the Frenchwoman to enlarge to Daisy on what she meant by the golden opportunity; no need for her to dwell upon the comforts and luxuries which were easily procurable by her—the dresses and equipages, the pomps and vanities which so many wasted their lives in endeavouring to obtain, and which might be hers at once.

Hers; and with them what? A life of shame, a career such as she had regarded always with loathing and horror; such as she had told her mother that, whatever temptation might assail her, she had sufficient courage and strength of mind to avoid. And such a life, not with a young lover, the warmth of whose passion, whatever might be its depth, it was impossible to deny, but with a man no longer young, who pretended to no sentiment for her beyond admiration, and who, polished, courteous, and gentlemanly as he was, would probably look upon her as any other appanage of his wealth and position, and care for her no more.

And yet, and yet were they to go on for ever—the long days of drudgery, the nights in the cheerless garret, the weary existence with the one ray of hope which illumined it, the love for Paul, soon necessarily to be quenched for ever? She could not bear to think of that. Should she give it up, fling all to the winds, tell her lover on his return, which she was now daily expecting, that she could stand it no longer; bid him take her and do with her as he willed—marry her or not, as he chose, but let her feel that there was something worth living for, some bond of union which, legal or illegal, lessened the hard exigences of daily life, and took something of the grimness off the aspect of the world?

She was mad! Was that to be the end of all her cultivated coldness and self-restraint? Had she quietly, if not cheerfully, accepted the wretched life which she had been leading so long, with the one aim of establishing for herself a position, and was she now going to undo all that she had so patiently planned and so weariedly carried out in one moment of headstrong passion? Was the position which she hoped to acquire,

for which she had so earnestly striven, to prove to be that of a poor man's mistress, where everything would have been lost and nothing gained? Nothing gained! Nothing? not Paul's love? No, she had that now; and she was quite sufficient woman of the world to know that in the chance of such a contingency as she had contemplated, she might not be long in losing it.

As the time for Paul Derinzy's return approached, Daisy became more and more unsettled. It would seem as though Colonel Orpington had been made aware of the speedily anticipated reappearance on the scene of one who might be considered his rival; and, indeed, Miss Bella Merton had been several times recently to Mr. Wilson's chambers in the Temple, and held long conversations with the occupant thereof. As he was more than usually assiduous in his attentions to Fanny, she, Madame Clarisse, had accompanied them once or twice to the theatre; and on one occasion, when the Frenchwoman had declared that Fanfan was dying for fresh air—it was one morning after the girl had passed a sleepless night in thinking over all the difficulties that beset her future, and she looked very pale and weary-eyed — the Colonel had placed his brougham at the disposal of the ladies, and insisted on their driving down in it to Richmond, whither he proceeded on horseback, and had luncheon provided for them on arrival at the hotel.

More assiduous, but not more particular beyond telling her laughingly one day that he should speedily ask her for an interview, at which he should ask her consent to a little project that he intended to carry out, the Colonel's conversation was of his usual ordinary light kind; but Madame Clarisse's hints were more subtle than ever, and Daisy could not fail to have some notion of what the project to be proposed at the suggested interview might be.

One Sunday morning—Paul was to come up from Devonshire that night, and had written her a wild letter full of rhapsodical delight at the idea of seeing her again the next day—Daisy was seated in her room.

Her little well-worn writing-desk was open, the paper was

before her, the pen lay ready to her hand; but the girl was leaning back in her chair, and wondering how much or how little of the actual state of affairs she ought to describe in the letter to her mother which she was then about to write; for it had come to that, that there was concealment between them. Of her acquaintance with Colonel Orpington, Daisy had breathed never a word; while on her side Mrs. Stothard had carefully concealed the fact, that she was an inmate of the house which was the home of her daughter's lover, where at the time he was actually staying.

Daisy was roused from her deliberation by a rap at the door, and by the immediate entrance of Mrs. Gillot, her landlady, who told her that a gentleman wished to see her.

It was come at last then, this interview at which all was to be decided!

Daisy felt her face flush, and knew that Mrs. Gillot remarked it.

"A gentleman!" she repeated.

"Ay, a gentleman," said the worthy woman; "and one of the right sort too, or you may depend upon it I wouldn't have had him shown into my front parlour, where he now is. Not but what you can take care of yourself, Miss Fanny, and I trust you to give any jackanapes a regular good setting-down, with your quiet look, and your calm voice, and your none-of-your-impudence manner; but this is a gentleman, and when I showed him into the parlour, I told him I was sure you would see him."

"I will come directly, Mrs. Gillot."

She rose, took a hasty glance in the little scrap of looking-glass, and descended the stairs.

Her heart beat highly as she laid her hand upon the parlour-door. It resumed its normal rate or pulsation as the door opened beneath her touch, and she saw, standing before her on the hearth-rug, the unexpected figure of John Merton.

Something in her face when she first recognised him, something in the tone of her voice, some note of surprise and disappointment when she bade him good-morning, must have betrayed itself, for he said hurriedly:

"You did not expect to see me, Miss Stafford."

"I confess I did not; but of course I am very glad. I—I hope Bella is quite well?"

"Bella is very well, I believe."

"Have you brought me some message from her?"

"No, indeed. She does not even know I was coming here."

There was a pause, then he said:

"I suppose you do not think I have taken a liberty in calling on you, Miss Stafford?"

"Oh dear, no! I have known you so long, and your sister is such an intimate acquaintance of mine, that I could not be anything of that sort. What makes you ask?"

"Well, you looked so—so surprised at seeing me."

"I was surprised at seeing anyone. No one ever comes here after me."

"No?" said John Merton, interrogatively, and his face seemed to brighten as he said it.

"No," said Daisy; "and my landlady must have been as much astonished as I am. You must have made a very favourable impression on her to obtain admittance."

"Mrs. Gillot is a very old friend of mine," said John Merton. "She has known me since I was a boy; but I should not have presumed upon that acquaintance to ask for you, nor indeed, Miss Stafford, should I have ventured to come here at all, if I had not something very particular to say to you."

"Very particular to say to me!"

"To say to you something so special and particular, that your answer to it may change the course of my whole life. I must ask you to listen to me, Miss Stafford. I won't keep you a minute longer than I can help."

Daisy bowed her head in acquiescence. She had taken a seat, but he remained standing before her, half leaning over towards her, with one hand on the table.

Poor John Merton! The girl's eyes rested on that hand, with its great thick red fingers and coarse knuckles and clumsy wrist; and then they travelled up the shiny sleeve of his black coat, and over his blue silk gold-sprigged tie to his good-looking

face shining with soap, and his jet-black hair glistening with grease. And then she dropped her eyes, and inwardly shuddered, comparing them with the hands and features of two other people of her acquaintance.

"You said just now," said John Merton, in rather a husky voice, "that you were not annoyed at my calling upon you, because you had known me so long, and because you were so intimate with my sister. I think I might allege those two reasons as the cause of my being here now. All the time I have known you I have had but one feeling towards you, and all that I have heard my sister say of you—and she seems never to be talking of anybody else—has deepened and concentrated that feeling. What that feeling is," continued John, "I don't think I need try to explain. I don't think I could if I tried, unless—unless I were to say that I would lay down my life to save you from an ache or a pain, that I worship the very ground you tread on, and that I look upon you like an angel from heaven!"

His voice shook as he said these words; but the fervour which possessed him lit up his features; and as Daisy stole an upward glance at him, and saw his pleading eyes and working mouth, she forgot the homeliness of his appearance, and wondered how her most recent thoughts about him had ever found a place in her mind.

He caught something of her feeling, and said quickly, "You are not angry with me?"

She shook her head in dissent.

"You mustn't be that," he said, "whatever answer you may give me. I know how inferior I am to you in every possible way. I know, I can't help knowing, I could not help hearing even at that girl's the other evening, the last time we met, how you were noticed and admired by people in a very different position from mine: have known this and borne it all, and never spoken—shouldn't have spoken now, but that there is come a chance in my life which I must either accept or relinquish, and I want you to decide it for me."

"You want me to decide it!"

"You, and you alone can do it. This is how it comes about,

Miss Stafford. You know I am what they call a 'counter-jumper,'" said he, with a little bitter laugh; "but I know, that though it is a distinction without a difference, I suppose, to those who are not in the trade, I am one of the first hands with perhaps the largest silk-mercers in London, and I have been taken frequently abroad by one of the firm when he has gone to buy goods in a foreign market. I must have pleased them, I suppose, for now they are going to set up an agency in Lyons; and they have offered it to me, and I shall take it if you will come with me as my wife."

He paused, and Daisy was silent.

After a minute, he said hurriedly:

"You don't speak. It is not a bad thing pecuniarily. They would make it about three hundred a year, I think, and I should get very good introductions, and it would be like beginning life again for both of us. I thought it would be a good chance of shaking off any old associations; and as the position would be tolerable, it would be only me—myself, I mean—that you would have to put up with, and—— You don't speak still! I haven't offended you?"

She looked up at him. Her face was very pale, and her hands fluttered nervously before her; but there was no break in her voice as she said:

"Offended me! You have done me the greatest honour in your power, and you talk about offence! You must not ask me for an answer now; I cannot give it; the whole thing has been so sudden. I will think it over, and write to you in a day or two at most. Meantime, I think it would be advisable for both our sakes that you should not speak of what has occurred, even to your sister."

"Of course not," he said; "anything you wish. And you tell me that I may hope?"

"I did not quite say that," she said with a smile. "I told you you must wait for my reply. You shall have it very soon. Now, good-bye."

She held out her hand to him, and he took it in his own—which again looked horribly red and common, she thought—then he just touched it with his lips, and he was gone.

"Another element, a third element in the confusion," said Daisy to herself as she reascended the stairs to her room; "but one not so difficult to deal with as the others."

CHAPTER XX.

FARTHER SOUNDINGS.

IT was not likely that a man of George Wainwright's intelligence and habits of observation could remain long domesticated in a household like that of the Derinzys', without speedily reading the characteristics of its various members.

In a very little time after his arrival, the young man—whose manners were so quiet and sedate as to lead Captain Derinzy to hint to his wife that he thought Wainwright rather a muff—had reckoned up his host and knew exactly the amount of vanity, silliness, and ignorance which so largely swayed the estimable gentleman; had gauged Mrs. Derinzy's scheming worldliness, knew why it originated and at what it aimed; had thoroughly solved the problem, so difficult to all others, of Mrs. Stothard's position in the house; and knew exactly the character of the malady under which Annette was suffering.

He ought to have known more about Annette than about anybody else, for nine-tenths of his time—all, indeed, that he could spare from the somewhat assiduous attentions of his host—were given to her. He walked with her, made long explorations of the neighbouring cliffs, long expeditions inland among the lovely Devonshire lanes, lovelier still with the fiery hue of autumn, and even induced her to join him and Paul in sundry boat-excursions, where, well wrapped up in rugs and tarpaulins, she lay on the flush-deck of the little fishing-smack, half frightened, half filled with childlike glee at her novel experience.

Paul had often laughed and said to their common associates, "When old George is caught, you may depend upon it, it will be a very desperate case."

And "old George" was caught now, Paul thought, and thought rightly: the delicacy, the good nature, the sweet womanly graces of the girl showing ever and anon between her sufferings—for during George's stay at Beachborough, Annette had been free from any regular attack, yet from time to time there were threatenings of the coming storm which were perfectly perceptible to his experienced eye—nay, perhaps the very fact of the malady under which she laboured, and the position in which she was placed, had had strong influence over George Wainwright's honest heart. As for Paul, he was so thoroughly astonished at the change which had taken place in his cousin since George's arrival, and at the wonderful pains and trouble which George himself took to interest and amuse Annette, that this wonderment entirely filled so much of his time as was not devoted to thinking of Daisy. He wondered and pondered, and at last the conviction grew strong upon him, that George must be in love.

At first he laughed at the idea. The sober, steady, almost grave man, who had such large experience of life, and who yet had managed to steer clear, so far as Paul knew, of anything like a flirtation. Flirtation, indeed, would be the last thing to which his friend would stoop, "when old George is caught." Something, perhaps, also—"for pride attends us still"—was due to the fact that Annette always showed the greatest desire for his company, and undisguised delight at his attention and admiration. Never in the course of her previous life had the girl met with anyone who seemed so completely to comprehend her, whose talk she could so readily understand, whose manner was so completely fascinating, and yet somehow always commanded her respect. She despised her uncle, she disliked her aunt, and hated Mrs. Stothard though she feared her; but in the slow and painful workings of that brain she felt that if at those—those dreadful times when semi-blankness fell upon her, and her perception of all that was going on was dim, and obscure, and confused—if at such a time George Wainwright

were to order her to do anything in opposition to the promptings of that devil, which on those occasions possessed her, she felt she should be powerless to disobey him.

"I can't make it out, George; upon my soul, I can't," said Paul, as they were walking along the edge of the cliffs one morning smoking their pipes after breakfast.

"What is it that puzzles your great brain, and that prompts to such strong utterances?" asked George, laughing.

"You know perfectly well what I mean. You needn't try to be deceitful in your old age," said Paul; "for deceit is a thing which I don't think you would easily learn, and at all events does not go well with hair which is turning white at the temples, and a beard which is beginning to grizzle, Mr. Wainwright. You know perfectly well that I am alluding to the attentions which you are paying to my cousin, Miss Derinzy. And I should be glad to know, sir," continued Paul, vainly endeavouring to suppress the broad grin which was spreading over his face, "I should be glad to know, sir, how you reconcile your conduct with your notions of honour, knowing, as you perfectly well do, that that lady is my affianced bride."

"Don't be an ass, Paul," said George, smiling in his turn. "I dispute both your assertions, especially the last. The lady is nothing of the kind."

"No, poor dear child, that she certainly isn't. And I think on the whole that it is a very good thing that my affections are engaged in another quarter; for I am perfectly sure that, however much I might have wished it, Annette would never have had anything to say to me. I endeavoured to make my mother understand that, when she first talked to me on the subject when you first came down here; but she seemed to look upon Annette's wishes as having very little to do with the matter."

"Mrs. Derinzy's state of health possibly makes her take an exceptional view of affairs," said George, looking hard at his friend.

"Well, I declare I don't know about her state of health," said Paul. "I confess that, beyond a little peevishness, which is partly constitutional, I suppose, and partly brought on by

having lived so many years with the governor—good old fellow the governor, but an awful nuisance to have to be with constantly—I don't see that there is much the matter with my mother. Have you ever heard your father say anything about her illness, George?"

"My father is remarkably reticent in professional matters," said George. "I have never heard him speak about any illness in this house."

"Oh, of course, it was only about my mother that he could say anything," said Paul; "for the governor never has anything the matter with him, except a touch of sciatica now and then in his game leg; and Annette's seems to be—you know—one of those chronic cases which never come to much, and which no doctor can ever do any good to."

"I suppose you won't be sorry to get back to town, Master Paul?"

"I suppose you will be sorry to leave here, Master George? No; indeed, I am rather glad the end of my leave is coming on; no intended bad compliment to you, old fellow; your stay here has been the greatest delight to me; but the fact is, I am getting rather anxious about that young person in London, and shall be very glad to see her again."

George looked up at him with a comical face.

"You don't mean to say that since Theseus's departure, Ariadne has——"

"I mean to say nothing of the sort," said Paul, turning very red. "Daisy is the best girl in the world; but I don't know, somehow I don't think her letters have been quite as jolly lately—the last two, I mean; there is something in them which I can't exactly make out, and there is not something in them which I have generally found there; so that after all, as I said before, I shall be glad when I get back."

"Has Mrs. Derinzy said anything more to you on the subject which you wrote to me about?" asked George, with a very bad attempt at indifference

"No," said Paul; "she has begun it once or twice, but something has always intervened."

"Have you any idea that she has given up her intention of getting you to marry Miss Annette?"

"I fear not; I fear that her intention remains just the same, and that I shall have an immense deal of trouble in combating it. You see, events have changed since your arrival here, my dear George. But speaking dispassionately together, I don't see what line I can take with my mother in declining to propose for Annette, except the straightforward one that I won't do it. It seems highly ridiculous for a man in a government office, and with only the reversion of a sufficiently snug, but certainly not overwhelming, income in prospect, to refuse the chance of an enormous fortune, and the hand of a very pretty girl, who, as Mr. Swiveller says, has been expressly growing up for me."

"Yes," said George, reflectively, "I quite see what you mean; it will be a difficult task. But you intend to carry it through?"

"Most decidedly. Nothing would induce me to break with —with that young person in London; and if she were to break with me, God knows it would half kill me. I don't think I could solace myself by taking a wife with a lot of money, even if I could be such a ruffian as to attempt it."

So from this and fifty other conversations of a similar nature—for the theme was one which always engrossed his mind, and was constantly rising to his tongue—George Wainwright knew that there would be no obstacle to his love for Annette so far as Paul Derinzy was concerned. That young man had no care for his cousin even without the knowledge of the dreadful secret, which must be known to him some day, and the revelation of which would inevitably settle his resolution to decline a compliance with his mother's prayer.

That dreadful secret, always up-rearing its ghastly form in the path which otherwise was so smooth and so straight for George Wainwright's happiness! All his cogitations came to one invariable result—there could be no other explanation of it all. The illness which she herself could not explain, which came upon her from time to time, and during which she sank away from ordinary into mere blank existence, emerging

therefrom with no knowledge of what she had gone through; the mysterious woman, half nurse, half keeper, who watched so constantly and so grimly over her? the manner in which all questions touching upon the girl's illness were shirked by every member of the household; the delusion so assiduously kept up, under which Mrs. Derinzy and not her niece was made to appear as the sufferer; above all, the constant visits of his father—all these proved to George that the disorder under which Annette Derinzy laboured was insanity, and nothing else.

And the more he thought of it, the more terrified was he at the idea. Familiarity with mental disease, intercourse with those labouring under it, had by no means softened its terrors to George Wainwright. True, he had no physical fear in connection with the mere vulgar fright which is usually felt with "mad people." He had no experience of that; but he had seen so much of the gradual growth of the disorder; had so often marked the helpless, hopeless state into which those suffering under it fell—silently indeed, but surely—that he had come to regard it with greater terror than the fiercest fever or the deadliest plague.

And now, when for the first time in his life he had fixed his affections on a girl who seemed likely to return his passion, and who in every other way was calculated to form the charm of his home and the happiness of his fireside, he had to acknowledge to himself that she was afflicted with this dreadful malady. It was impossible to palter with the question; he had tried to do so a thousand times; but his strong common sense would not be juggled with. And there the dread fact remained—the girl he loved was frequently liable to attacks of insanity. He must face that, look at it steadily, and see what could be done. Could she be cured?

Ah! how well he knew the futility of such a hope! How many instances had he seen in his father's house of patients whose disease was not of nearly such long standing as Annette's, had indeed only just begun, and who were in a few days, or weeks, or months at the farthest, to be restored, with all their faculties calmed and renewed, to their anxious friends!—and

how many of them remained there now, or had been removed to other asylums, in the hope that change might effect that restoration which skill and science had failed in bringing about!

The last day of their stay had arrived, and on the morrow George was to accompany his friend back to London. The Captain was out for his usual ramble, Paul was closeted with his mother, and George was sitting in the little room which, owing to the few books possessed by the family gathered together in it, was dignified by the name of a "study," and which overlooked a splendid view of the bay. He was standing at the window, gazing out over the broad expanse of water, thinking how strangely the usually calm-flowing current of his life had been vexed and ruffled since his arrival there, wondering what steps he could take towards the solution of the difficulty under which he laboured, and what would be the final end of it all, when he heard a door close gently behind him, and looking round, saw Annette by his side.

"I am so glad I've found you, Mr. George," she said, looking up at him frankly, and putting out her hand (she always called him "Mr. George" now; she had told him she hated to use his surname, it reminded her of disagreeable things), "I am so glad I've found you. Mrs. Stothard reminded me that it was your last day here, and said I ought to make the most of it."

"Mrs. Stothard said that?" asked George, with uplifted eyebrows; "I would sooner it had been your own idea, Miss Annette."

"The truth is, I think I am a little vexed at the notion of your going," said the girl.

"Come, that is much better," said George, with a smile.

"No, no, I mean what I say; I am very, very sorry that you are going away." As she said this her voice, apparently involuntarily, dropped into a soft caressing tone, and her eyes were fixed on him with an earnest expression of regard.

"It is very pleasing to me to be able to know that my presence or absence causes you any emotion," said George.

"I have been so happy since you have been here," said the girl; "you are so different from anybody else I have ever met

before. You seem to understand me so much better than any one else, to take so much more interest in me, and to be so much more intelligible yourself; your manner is different from that of other people; and there is something in the tone of your voice which I cannot explain, but which perfectly thrills me."

"I declare you will make me vain, Annette."

"That would be impossible; you could not be vain, Mr. George—you are far too sensible and good. It is singular to see how wonderfully well I have been since you have been here. On the morning after your arrival I felt as though I were going to have one of my wretched attacks, and Mrs. Stothard said it was because I had talked too much, and been too much excited the previous evening. But it passed off; and though I don't think I have ever talked so much to anyone in my life before, and certainly was never so interested in anyone's conversation, there has been no recurrence of it, and I have been perfectly well."

The bright look had passed away from George's face, and he was regarding her now with earnest eyes.

"If I thought that had actually been accomplished by my presence, I should be happy indeed; more happy in expectation of the future than in thinking over the past."

"In expectation of the future!" repeated the girl, pondering over the words. "Oh yes, surely; you are going away now, but you will come again to walk with me, and to talk with me; and you are only going away for a time. How strange I never thought of this before."

As she said these words she crept closer to him; and he, bending down, took her small white hand between his, and looked into her face with a long gaze of deep compassion and great love.

"Yes, Annette," he said, "I will come again, and I hope before very long. You must understand that this time, these past few weeks, have been quite as happy to me as you say they have been to you; that if you have found me different from anyone you have ever known, I, in my turn, have never seen anyone like you—anyone in whom I could take such interest, for whom I could do so much."

He raised her hand to his lips and kissed it tenderly, and at that moment the door opened, and Paul entered hurriedly. He gave a short low whistle as he marked the group before him, then advancing hurriedly, he said :

"George, it is all over, my boy ; the storm we have been expecting so long has burst at last. My mother and I have just had a very bad quarter of an hour together."

During the foregoing conversation Mrs. Stothard, sitting in her room, heard the sound of the spring-bell which was suspended over her bed ; the handle of this bell was in Mrs. Derinzy's apartments, and it was only used under exceptional circumstances, such as at times of Annette's illness, or when Mrs. Derinzy required instant communication with the nurse.

Mrs. Stothard heard the sound, but seemed in no way greatly influenced thereby ; she looked up very calmly, saying to herself, "I suppose some climax has arrived ; the departure of this young man was sure to bring it about. She has been fidgety lately, I have noticed, at the constant attention Mr. Wainwright has paid to Annette, and at the evident delight with which the girl has received the attentions. That bids fair to go exactly as I could have wished it. But there is some hitch in the other arrangement, I fear, from the little I could overhear of what he said to his friend the other day about Fanny ; it must have been about Fanny, although he called her by some other name which I couldn't catch. He seemed nervously anxious about her, and appears to think that his absence from town has weakened her affection for him. That ought not to be, and that is not at all like Fanny's tactics ; though there is something wrong, I fear, for I have not heard from her for some time, and her last letter was scarcely satisfactory. Yes, yes," she added impatiently, as the bell sounded again, "I am coming. It seems impossible for you, Mrs. Derinzy, to bear the burden of your trouble alone, even for five minutes."

When she entered the room, she found Mrs. Derinzy lying on the sofa with her head buried in the pillow ; she was moaning and sobbing hysterically, and rocking her body to and fro.

"Are you ill?" asked Mrs. Stothard, calmly, as she took up

her position at the end of the sofa, and surveyed her mistress without any apparent emotion.

"Yes, very ill, very ill indeed—half broken and crushed," cried Mrs. Derinzy. "It is too hard, Martha, it is too hard to have to go through what I have suffered, and to have all one's hopes blighted by the wilfulness of one for whom I have toiled and slaved so hard and so long."

"You mean Mr. Paul," said Mrs. Stothard. "I suppose that, notwithstanding my strong advice to the contrary, you have persisted in your determination, and asked him, before leaving to return to London, to give his answer about your project?"

"Yes," sobbed Mrs. Derinzy, "I have. I had him in here just now, and I went over it all again. I told him how, when I first heard of that ridiculous will which his uncle Paul had made, I determined that the fortune which ought to have been left to my boy, should become his somehow or other; how I had decided upon the marriage with Annette; how for all these years I had worked to compass it and bring it about: and how, now the time had arrived when the marriage ought to take place——"

"You didn't tell him anything about Annette's illness?" asked Mrs. Stothard, interrupting.

"Of course not, Martha," said Mrs. Derinzy, raising her head and looking angrily at the nurse; "how could you ask such a ridiculous question?"

"It is no matter, he will know it soon enough," said Mrs. Stothard, quietly. "Well, he refused?"

"He did," said Mrs. Derinzy, again bursting into tears, "like a wicked and ungrateful boy as he is; he refused decidedly."

"Did he give any reason?" asked Mrs. Stothard.

"He said that he had other views and intentions," said Mrs. Derinzy. "He talked in a grand theatrical kind of way about some passion that he had for somebody, and his heart, and a vast amount of nonsense of that kind."

"He is in love with somebody else, then?" asked Mrs. Stothard, looking hard at her mistress.

"So I gather from what he said; but I wouldn't listen to him for a moment on that subject. I told him I would get his father to speak to him, and that I myself would speak to his friend Mr. Wainwright, who appears to me never to leave Annette's side."

"So much the better for the chance of carrying out your wishes," said Mrs. Stothard, grimly. "That is to a certain extent my doing; I knew that Mr. Wainwright would be appealed to in this matter, and I thought it advisable that he should have just as much influence with Annette as he has with Paul; not that I think you can in the least rely upon his recommending his friend to fall in with your views."

"You don't think he will?"

"I don't, indeed. Though he has given no sign, I should be very much astonished if he don't completely master the mystery of the girl's illness; and if so, it is not likely he would recommend this scheme to his friend without showing him exactly the details of the bargain proposed."

"Bargain, indeed, Martha!"

"It is a bargain and nothing else, as you know very well, and you and I may as well call things by their plain names. What do you propose to do now?"

"I told Paul I would give him a couple of months in which to think it over finally; at the end of that time we shall go to town for a few weeks, for I really believe Captain Derinzy will go out of his mind if we have not some change, and there will be no danger now in taking Annette with us. Then Paul will have had ample time to discuss it with Mr. Wainwright, and on his decision will of course depend how our future lives are to be passed."

"If Mr. Paul is still obstinate, you think there will be no further occasion to keep Miss Annette in seclusion?" asked Mrs. Stothard.

"Miss Annette will be nothing to me, then," said Mrs. Derinzy, "except that if she marries anyone else without Captain Derinzy's consent, she loses all her fortune; and I will take care that that consent is not very easily given."

"That is a new element in the affair," said Mrs. Stothard to

herself, as she walked back to her room; "but not one which is likely to prove an impediment to my friend the philosopher here."

CHAPTER XXI.

FATHER AND SON

NOTWITHSTANDING there was a most excellent understanding between George Wainwright and his father, and as much affection as usually subsists between men similarly related, they saw very little of each other, although inhabiting, as it were, the same house. They had scarcely any tastes or pursuits in common. When not engaged in actual practice, in study, or communicating the result of that study to the world, Dr. Wainwright liked to enjoy his life, and did enjoy it in a perfectly reputable manner, but very thoroughly. He read the last new novel, and went to the last new play of which people in society were talking; he dined out with tolerable frequency; and took care never to miss putting in an appearance at certain *salons*, where the announcement of his name was heard with satisfaction, and at which the announcement of his presence in the next morning's newspaper was calculated to do him service.

The Doctor had the highest respect and a very deep regard for his son, whose acquirements he did not undervalue, but with whose tastes he could not sympathise; so it was that they comparatively very seldom met; and though on the occasions of their meeting there was always great cordiality on both sides, the relations between them were more those of friends than of kinsmen, more especially such nearly allied kinsmen as parent and child.

On the second evening after his return from Beachborough,

George Wainwright dined at his club, and instead of going home as was almost his invariable custom, turned up St. James's Street with the intention of proceeding to his father's rooms in the Albany.

It was a dull muggy November night, and George shuddered as he made his way through the streets and walked into the hospitable arcade, at the door of which the gold-laced porter stood in astonishment at the unfamiliar apparition of Dr. Wainwright's son.

"The Doctor's in, and alone, sir, I think," said he, in reply to George's inquiry. "The same rooms, however—3 in Z; he has not moved since you were last here."

George nodded, and passed on. On his arrival at his father's rooms, which were on the first-floor, he found the oak sported; but he knew that this really meant nothing, it being the Doctor's habit to show "out," as it were, against any chance callers; while, if he were within, the initiated could always obtain admission by a peculiar knock. This knock George gave at once, and speedily heard the sound of someone moving within. Presently the doors were opened and Dr. Wainwright appeared on the threshold; he held a reading-lamp in his hand, which he raised above his head as he peered into the face of his visitor.

"George!" he cried, after an instant's scrutiny, "this is a surprise. Come in, my dear boy. How damp you are, and what a wretched night! Come in and make yourself comfortable."

"I am not disturbing you, father, I hope?" said George, as he followed the Doctor into the room. "As usual, you are in the thick of it, I see," he continued, while pointing to a pile of books, some open, some closed, with special passages marked in them by pieces of paper hanging out of the edges, and to a mass of manuscript on the Doctor's blotting pad.

"Not a bit, my dear boy, not a bit," said the Doctor; "I was merely demolishing old Dilsworth's preposterous theories as regards puerperal insanity. By-the-way, you should look at his pamphlet, George; you know quite sufficient of the subject to comprehend in an instant what an idiot he makes of

himself; indeed, I should be quite glad to escape from his unsound premises and ridiculous conclusions into the region of common sense."

"You are looking very well," said George; "your hard work does not seem to do you any harm."

"No, indeed, my dear boy; the harder I work, the better I feel, I think; but I take a little more relaxation than I did, and I like to have things comfortable about me."

The Doctor gave a careless glance round the room as he spoke. He certainly had things comfortable there: the paper was a dark green; all the furniture was in black oak—not Wardour Street, nor manufactured in the desolate region of the Curtain Road in Shoreditch, but real black oak, the spoil of country mansions whose owners had gone to grief, and labourers' cottages, the tenants of which did not know the value of their possession, and were not proof against the blandishments of the Hebrew emissary, who was so flattering with his tongue and so ready with his cash. On the walls hung a large painting of a nude figure by Etty, supported on either side by a glowing landscape by Turner and a breezy sea-scape by Stanfield. A noble old bookcase stood in one corner of the room, filled with literature of all kinds—for the Doctor was an omnivorous reader, and could have passed an examination as to the characters and qualities of the three leading serials of the day, as well as in the secular and professional volumes which filled his lower shelves; while at the other end of the room a huge sideboard was covered with glass, from heavy *moyen-âge* Bohemian to the thinnest and lightest productions of the modern blower's art.

"What will you take?" asked the Doctor. "Like myself, you are not much of a drinker, I know; but, like myself, you understand and appreciate a little of what is really excellent. Now, on that sideboard there are sherry, claret, and brandy, for all of which I can vouch. A little of the latter with some iced water?—the refrigerator is outside. Nothing? Ah, I forgot, you are dying for your smoke after dinner. Smoke away here, my boy; no one ever comes to these chambers who would be frightened at the anti-professional odour; and as for me, I

rather like the smell of a pipe, and especially delight in seeing your enjoyment of it; so fire away."

George lit his pipe, and both the men pulled their easy-chairs in front of the fire. There was an undeniable likeness between them in feature as well as in figure, though the elder man was so much more *soigné*, so much better got-up, so much better preserved than the younger.

"I have been away for some time," said George, after a few puffs at his pipe; "as perhaps you know."

"Oh yes, I found it out very soon after your departure, from the desolation which seemed to have fallen upon the house down yonder. Nurses and patients joined in one chorus of regret; and as for poor old Madame Vaughan, she seemed actually to forget the loss of the child she has been bewailing for so many years in her intense sorrow at your departure."

"Poor dear *maman!*" said George, with a smile; "I feared she would miss me and my nightly visits very much. It's so long since I went away that I imagine I was regarded as a permanent fixture in the establishment."

"I confess I looked upon you in that light very much myself, George," said the Doctor, "and after your departure felt what Mr. Browning calls the 'conscience prick and memory smart' at not having previously asked why and where you were going. It is rather late to pretend any interest now you have returned, but still I would ask where you have been and why you went."

"I have been staying with some people who are friends of yours down in the west."

"Down in the west you have been staying?" said the Doctor. "Whom do I know down in the west? Penruddock—Bulteel—Holdsworth?"

"Not so far west as where those people you have just named live," said George. "I have been staying with the Derinzys."

"The Derinzys!"

And the Doctor's eyebrows went up into his large forehead, and his usually calm face expressed intense astonishment

After a few minutes' pause, he said:

"Ah, I forgot. Young Derinzy is a colleague of yours, and a chum, I think I have heard you say."

"Yes; it was on his invitation I went down to stay with his people. He was there on leave himself at the time."

"Ah!" said the Doctor, who had recovered his equanimity. "And what did you think of his people, as you call them?"

"They were very pleasant, kind, and unaffected, and thoroughly hospitable," said George. "Mrs. Derinzy is said to be in bad health. I understand that you have been occasionally summoned down there on consultation, sir?"

He looked hard at his father; but the Doctor's face was unmoved.

"Yes," he said quietly, "I remember having been down there once or twice."

"To visit Mrs. Derinzy?"

"I was sent for to visit Mrs. Derinzy."

George paused for a moment, then he said:

"I saw a good deal of a young lady who seems to be domesticated there—a niece of the family, as I understand—Miss Annette."

"Ah, indeed! You saw a good deal of Miss Annette? And what did you think of her?"

"I thought her charming. You have seen her?"

"Oh yes, I have seen her frequently."

"And what is your impression?"

"The same as yours; Miss Annette is very charming."

The two men formed a curious contrast. George had laid by his pipe and was leaning over an arm of his chair, looking eagerly and scrutinisingly in his father's face; the Doctor lay back at his length, his comfortable dressing-gown wrapped around him, his slippered feet on the fender, his eyes fixed on the fire, while he gently tapped the palm of one hand with an ivory paper-knife which he held in the other.

"Father," said George Wainwright, suddenly rising and standing on the rug before the fire, "I want to talk to you about Annette Derinzy."

"My dear George," said the Doctor, without changing his position, "I shall be very happy to talk to you about any

inmate of that house; always respecting professional confidences recollect, George."

"You must hear me to the end first, sir, and then you will see what confidences you choose to give to, and what to withhold from, me. Whatever may be your decision I shall, of course, cheerfully abide by; but it is rather an important matter, as you will find before I have finished, and I look to you for assistance and advice in it."

There was such an earnestness in the tone in which George spoke these last words, that the Doctor raised himself from his lounging position and regarded his son with astonishment.

"My dear boy," said he, putting out his hands and grasping his son's warmly, "you may depend on having both to the utmost extent of my power. We don't see much of each other, and we don't make much parade of parental and filial affection; but I don't think we like each other the less for that; and I know that I am very proud of you, and only too delighted to have any opportunity—you give me very few—of being of service to you. Now speak."

"You never told me you knew the Derinzys, father."

"My dear boy, I don't suppose I have ever mentioned the names of one-third of the persons whom I know professionally in your hearing."

"But you knew Paul was my friend."

"Exactly," said the Doctor, with a smile, "and in my knowledge of that fact you might perhaps find the reason of my silence."

"Ah!" said George, "of course I see now; it is no use beating about the bush any longer; I must come to it at last, and may as well do so at once. You will tell me, won't you? Is Annette Derinzy mad?"

The Doctor was not the least disturbed by the question, nor by the excited manner—so different from George's usual calm—in which it was put. He looked up steadily as he replied:

"Yes; I should say decidedly yes, in the broad and general acceptation of the word; for people are called mad who are occasionally subjects of mental hallucination, and at other

times are remarkably clear-sighted and keen-witted. Miss Derinzy is one of these."

"Have you attended her?"

"For some years."

"And she has always been subject to these attacks?"

"Ever since I knew her. I was, of course, at first called in to her on account of them."

"Your attendance on Mrs. Derinzy has been merely a pretext?"

"Exactly; a pretext invented by the family and not by me."

"Have you any reason for imagining why this pretext was made?"

"They wished to keep everyone in ignorance of Miss Derinzy's state, and asked me to procure a trustworthy person whom I could recommend as her nurse——"

"Ah, Mrs. Stothard?"

"Exactly; Mrs. Stothard—you have made her acquaintance too?—and to visit the young lady from time to time."

"And you were asked to keep the fact of your visits from me?"

"Certainly. The Derinzys were aware that you were in the same office with their son, and were most desirous that his cousin's state should be concealed from him, above all others. Why, I never thought proper to inquire."

"I know the reason," said George, with half a sigh. "Do you think that this dreadful disease under which Miss Derinzy suffers is progressing or decreasing?"

"I am scarcely in a position to say," said the Doctor. "Were she in London, or in any place easy of access, I should be better able to judge; but now I only visit her periodically, and even that by no means regularly, merely when I have a day or two which I can steal, so that I cannot judge of the increase or decrease, or of the extent of delirium. However, the last time I was there—yes, the last time—I happened to be present when one of the attacks supervened, and it was very strong, very strong indeed."

There was another pause, and then the Doctor said lightly:

"I think I may put you into the 'box' now, George, and ask you a few questions. You saw a great deal of Miss Derinzy, you say?"

"Yes; we were together every day."

"And you deduced your opinion of her mental state from your observation of her?"

"Not entirely."

"Of course you got no hint from any of the family, not even from Captain Derinzy himself, who is sufficiently stupid and garrulous?" said the Doctor, with a recollection of his last visit to Beachborough, and the familiarity under which he had writhed.

"No, from none of them; and certainly not from Miss Derinzy's manner, which, though unusually artless and child-like, decidedly bore no trace of insanity."

"But, my dear boy, you must have had your suspicions, or you would not have asked me the questions so plainly. How did these suspicions arise?"

"From Annette's description of her illness—of her symptoms at the time of attack, the blank which fell upon her, and her sensations on her recovery; from the mere fact of Mrs. Stothard's presence there—itself sufficient evidence to any one accustomed to persons of Mrs. Stothard's class—and from words and hints which Mrs. Stothard—whether with or without intention, I have never yet been able to determine—occasionally let drop; from other facts which accidentally came to my knowledge, but of which I think you are ignorant, and which I think it is not important that you should know."

"For a superficial observer you have made a remarkable diagnosis of the case, George," said the Doctor, regarding his son with calm appreciation; "it is a thousand pities you did not take to the profession."

"Thank God, I didn't," said the son; "even as it is I have seen enough of it—or, at least, I should have said 'Thank God' two months ago; now, I almost wish I had."

"You would like to have taken up this case?"

"I should."

"You would like to have cured your friend's cousin?"

"I should indeed."

"My dear George," said the Doctor, with a smile, "I think, as I just said, it is a great pity that you did not take up the profession. You have a certain talent, and great powers of reading the human mind, but you are given to desultory studies and pursuits; and your picture-painting, piano-playing, and German philosophy, all charming as they are, would have led you away from the one study on which a man in our profession must concentrate his every thought. I don't think, my dear George, that you would have been a better—well, what common people call a better 'mad doctor' than your father; I don't think the 'old man' would have been beaten by the 'boy' in this instance."

"I am sure not, sir; I never thought that for an instant: it was not that which prompted me to say what I did. Do I understand from your last remark that Miss Derinzy's disease is beyond your cure?"

"In my opinion, beyond any one's cure, my dear George."

"God help me!" And George groaned and covered his face with his hands.

The Doctor sprang to his feet, and stepping across to where George sat, laid his hand tenderly on his head.

"My dear boy," said he, "my dear George, what does all this mean?"

"Nothing, father," said George, raising his head, and shaking himself together, as it were, "nothing, father—nothing, at least, which should lead a man to make a fool of himself; but your last words were rather a shock to me, for I love Annette Derinzy, and I had hoped——"

"You love Annette Derinzy! You, whom we have all laughed at so long for your celibate notions, to have fallen in love now, and with Annette Derinzy! My poor boy, this is a bad business—a very bad business, indeed. I don't see what is to be done to comfort you."

"Nor I, father, nor I. You distinctly say there is no hope of her cure?"

"Speaking so far as I can judge, there is none. If she were under my special care for a certain number of weeks, so that I

saw her daily—Bah! I am talking as I might do to the friends of a patient. To you, my dear George, I say it would be of no use. It is a horrible verdict, but a true one—she can never be cured."

George was silent for a minute; then he said:

"Would there be any use in having a consultation?"

"My dear boy, not the slightest in the world. I will meet anyone that could be named. If this were a professional case, I should insist on a consultation, and the family apothecary would probably call in this old fool whose pamphlet I am just reviewing—Dilsworth, I mean, or Tokely, or Whittaker, or one of them; but I don't mind saying to my own son, that I am perfectly certain I know more than any of these men of my peculiar subject, and that, except for the mere sake of differing, they always in such consultations take their cue from me."

Another pause; then George said, his face suddenly lighting up:

"One moment, sir. I have some sort of recollection, when I was a student at Bonn, hearing of some German doctor who had achieved a marvellous reputation for having effected certain cures in insane cases which had been given up by everyone else."

"You mean old Hildebrand of Derrendorf," said the Doctor. "Yes, he was really a wonderful man, and did some extraordinary things. I never met him; but his cases were reported in the medical journals here, and made a great sensation at the time; but that is ten or twelve years ago, and I recollect hearing since that he had retired from practice. I should think by this time he must be dead."

"Then there is no hope," said George, sadly.

"I fear none," said his father. "If Hildebrand were alive, there would be no chance of his undertaking the case; for if I recollect rightly, he had always determined on retiring from the profession as soon as he had amassed a certain amount of money, which would enable him to pursue his studies in quiet. He was an eccentric genius too—one of the rough-and-ready school, they said, and particularly harsh and unpleasant in his manners. I recollect there was a joke that he frightened

people into their wits, as other patients were frightened out of theirs by their doctors; so that he would scarcely do for Miss Annette, even if we could command his services. By-the-way, of course there was no seizure while you were in the house?"

"Nothing of the kind. She was, as I said, perfectly calm and tranquil, and wonderfully artless and childlike."

"Yes; she remains the ruin of what would have been a most charming creature. That 'little rift within the lute,' as Tennyson has it, has marred all the melody. By-the-way, you said you knew the reason of Mrs. Derinzy's having impressed upon me the necessity of silence in regard to my visits there. What was it?"

"There is no secret in it now. Mrs. Derinzy always intended that her son Paul should marry his cousin."

"I see it all! An heiress, is she not, to an enormous property? A very good thing for her son."

"Ah! that was why, ever since symptoms of the girl's mental malady first began to develop themselves, the boy was kept away at school, even during the holidays, on some pretence or another; and why, since he has been at the Stannaries Office, he has, up to this time, always gone abroad or to stay with some friends on his leave of absence."

"Exactly. The secret has been well kept from him. And do you mean to say he does not know it now?"

"At this moment he hasn't the least idea of it."

"Then your friend is also your rival, my poor George?"

"No, indeed. Paul does not care in the least for Annette, and he is deeply pledged in another quarter. It was with a view of aiding him in extricating himself from the engagement which his mother was pressing upon him that he asked me down to the Tower."

"As neat a complication as could possibly be," said the Doctor.

"There is only one person whose way out seems to me tolerably clear," said George, "and that is Paul. See here, father; I am neither of an age nor of a temperament to rave about my love, or to make much purple demonstration about

anything. I shall not yet give up the idea that Annette Derinzy can be cured of the mental disease under which she suffers; and in saying this, I do not doubt your talent nor the truth of what you have said to me; but I have a kind of inward feeling that something will eventually be done to bring her right, and that I shall be the means of its accomplishment. I would not take this upon myself unless my position were duly authorised. I need not tell you—I am your son—that nothing would induce me to move in the matter, if my doing so involved the least breach of loyalty to Paul, the least breach of faith to his father or mother; but before I take a single step, I shall get from him a repetition of his decision, already twice or thrice given, in declining to become a suitor for Annette's hand; and armed with this, I shall seek an interview with his father and mother, and explain his position and my own."

"And then?" said the Doctor, with a grave face.

"And then, *qui vivra verra*."

"Well, George," said his father, laying his hand affectionately again on his son's head, "you know I wish you God speed. You have plenty of talent and endurance and pluck; and, Heaven knows, you will have need of them all."

CHAPTER XXII.

L'HOMME PROPOSE.

ONE morning in the early winter, Colonel Orpington walked into the Beaufort Club, and taking his letters from the hall-porter as he passed, entered the coffee-room and took possession of the table which for many years he had been accustomed to regard as almost his own.

There was no occasion for him to order any breakfast, so well were his ways known in that establishment, of which he

was not merely one of the oldest, but one of the most conspicuous of the members. The officers of the household, from Riboulet the *chef* and Woodman the house-steward down to the smallest page-boys, all held the Colonel in very wholesome reverence; and amongst the twelve hundred members on the books, the behests of none were more speedily obeyed than his.

While the repast was preparing, Colonel Orpington glanced over the envelopes of the letters which he had taken from the porter and laid on the table in military order before him. They are many and various: heavy official-looking letters, thin-papered missives from the Continent, and two or three delicate little notes. The Colonel selects one of these last, which is addressed in an obviously foreign hand, though bearing a London post-mark; the others are put aside; the dainty double-eyeglasses are brought from their hiding-place inside his waistcoat and adjusted across his nose, and he falls to the perusal of the little note. A difficult hand to read apparently, for the Colonel, though somewhat careful of showing any symptoms of loss of sight to the more youthful members of the club then present, by whom he has a certain suspicion he is looked upon as a fogey, has to hold it in various lights and twist it up and down before he can master its contents. When he has mastered them they do not appear to be of a particularly reassuring character; for the Colonel shakes his head, utters a short low whistle, and is stroking his chin with his hand, as though deep in thought, when the advanced guard of his breakfast makes its appearance.

"'Coming back at once,'" says the Colonel to himself; "at least, so far as I can make out Clarisse's confoundedly cramped handwriting. 'Coming back at once,' and from what she can make out from Fanny's talk, not in the best of tempers either, and likely to bring matters to an end; and Clarisse thinks I must declare myself at once. Well, I don't see why not.

"'Gad, it seems to me an extraordinary thing that I, who have been under fire so many times in these kind of affairs, should have been hesitating and hanging back and beating

about the bush for so long with this girl! To be sure, she is quite unlike many of the others; more like a person in society, or rather, like what used to be society in my time: what goes by that name now is a very different thing. There's a sort of air of breeding about her, and a kind of *noli me tangere* sort of thing mixed up with all her attractiveness, that makes the whole business a very different thing from the ordinary throwing the handkerchief and being happy ever after.

"Coming back, eh! My young friend Derinzy—member here, by-the-way; letters had better go to one of the other clubs in future; it is best to be on the safe side. Coming back, eh! And now what are—what parents call—his 'intentions,' I wonder? Scarcely so 'strictly honourable' as the middle-class father longs to hear professed by enamoured aristocrats. If he meant marriage, he would certainly have proposed before he left town, when, if all I learn is true, he was so wildly mad about the girl he would not have left her to—— And yet, perhaps, that is the very reason, though she said nothing, she has evidently been pleased by the attentions which I have shown her; and this perhaps has caused her to slack off in her correspondence with this young fellow, or to influence its warmth, or something of that kind, and this may have had the effect of bringing him to book.

"If he were to declare off, how would that suit me? Impossible to say. In the fit of rage and disgust with him, she might say yes to anything I asked her; on the other hand, she might have a fit of remorse, and think that it was all from having listened to the blandishments of this serpent she lost a chance of enjoying a perpetual paradise with that bureaucratic young Adam.

"There is the other fellow, too—the young man 'in her own station of life'—shopkeeper, mechanic, whatever he is. Clarisse seems to have some notion that he is coming to the fore, though I don't think there is any chance for him. The girl's tastes lie obviously in quite a different line, and I am by no means certain that his being in the race is a bad thing for me. However, it's plainly time that something must be done; and now, how to do it?"

He threw down his napkin before him as he spoke and rose from the table. The young men who had been breakfasting near him, though perhaps they might have thought him a fogey, yet envied the undeniable position he held in society; envied him, above all, the perfect freshness and good health and the evident appetite with which he had just consumed his meal, while they were listlessly playing with highly-spiced condiments, or endeavouring to quench the flame excited by the previous night's dissipation with effervescing drinks. Sir Coke Only, the great railway contractor and millionaire, whose neighbouring table was covered with prospectuses and letters on blue paper, propounding schemes in which thousands were involved, envied the Colonel that consummate air of good breeding which he, the millionaire, knew he could never acquire, and that happy idleness which never seemed in store for him. The perfectly-appointed brougham, with its bit-champing, foam-tossing gray horse, stood at the club-door, waiting to whirl the man of business into the City, where he would be unceasingly occupied till dusk; "while that feller," as Sir Coke remarked to himself, "will be lunching with marchionesses and dropping into the five o'clock tea with duchesses, and taking it as easy as though he were as rich as Rothschild."

Perhaps the Colonel knew of the envy which he excited; he was certainly not disturbed, and perhaps even pleased, by it. He sauntered quietly into the waiting-room, walked to the window, and stood gazing unconsciously at the black little London sparrows hopping about in the black little bit of ground which was metropolitan for a garden, and lay between the club and Carlton House Terrace, while he collected his thoughts. Then he sat down at a table and wrote as follows:

"Beaufort Club, Tuesday.

"DEAR MISS STAFFORD,—The opportunity which I have been so long waiting for has at length arrived, and I think I see my way to the fulfilment of the promise made to you in the beginning of our acquaintance.

"If you will be at my lawyer's chambers, No. 5, Seldon

Buildings, Temple, at two o'clock this afternoon, he—Mr. John Wilson is his name—will enter into further particulars with you. I shall hear from him how he has progressed, and you will see me very shortly.—Very sincerely yours,

"JOHN ORPINGTON.

"P.S.—I have no doubt that Madame Clarisse will be able to spare you on your mentioning that you have business. You need not particularise its nature."

Then he wrote another letter consisting of one line :

"All right ; let her go.—J. O."

He addressed these respectively to Miss Fanny Stafford and Madame Clarisse, and despatched them to their destination.

It was with no particular excess of pleasure that Daisy received and perused the first-written of these epistles. To be sure, at the first glance over the words her face flushed and her eyes brightened ; but the next few minutes her heart sank within her with that undefined sense of impending evil of which we are all of us so frequently conscious. The thought of Paul's immediate return had been weighing upon her for some days ; she had been uncertain how to treat him. She could not help acknowledging to herself that her feelings towards him had undergone a certain amount of alteration during his absence. She was unwilling that that alteration should be noticed by him, and yet could not avoid a lurking suspicion that she must have betrayed it in her letters. She gathered this from the tone of his replies, more especially from his last communication, in which he announced his speedy arrival in town. Of course she had not breathed to him one word of her acquaintance with Colonel Orpington ; there was no occasion why she should have done so, she argued to herself ; the two men would never be brought in contact. And yet it would be impossible for her to renew the intimacy which had previously existed with Paul, without his becoming aware that she had other calls upon her time, and insisted upon being made acquainted with their

nature; and then, when he found it out, the fact of her having concealed this newly-formed friendship from him would tell very badly against her. It would have been very much better that she should have mentioned it, giving some sufficiently satisfactory account of its origin, and passing over it lightly as though it were of no moment. She could have done this in regard to the meeting with John Merton and its subsequent results—not that she had ever said anything of that to her lover, by-the-way—without, she was sure, exciting Paul's suspicion; but this was a different matter. In his last letter Paul had proposed to meet her on what would now be the next afternoon, and by that time she must have made up her mind fully as to the course she intended to pursue. The interview to which she was then proceeding might perhaps have an important effect upon her resolution. And as she thought of that interview her heart sank again, and her face became very grave and thoughtful; so grave and thoughtful did she look as she hurried along one of the dull streets in the neighbourhood of Russell Square, that a man to whom she was well known, and by whom every expression of her face was treasured, scarcely knew her, as, coming in the opposite direction, he encountered and passed by her. She did not notice him; but he turned, and in the next instant was by her side. She looked up; it was John Merton.

"You were walking at such a pace and looking so earnest, Miss Stafford," said he, after the first ordinary salutations, "that I scarcely recognised you. You are going into the City. May I walk part of the way with you? I am so glad to see you; I have been longing so anxiously to hear from you."

This was an awkward *rencontre*. Daisy had quite sufficient mental excitement with the interview to which she was proceeding. She had not calculated upon this addition to it, and answered him vaguely and unsatisfactorily.

"I have been very much occupied of late," said she. "The winter season is now coming upon us, you see, and I have scarcely any time to myself."

"It would have taken very little time to write yes or no," said poor John; "and if you knew the importance I attach to

the receipt of one of those two words from you, I think you would have endeavoured to let me know my fate. Will you let me offer you my arm?"

"No—no, thanks," said Daisy, drawing back.

"You—you don't like to be seen with me, perhaps, in the street?" asked John, with a bitter tone in his voice.

"No, not that at all; only people don't take arms nowadays, don't you know?"

"Don't they?" said John, still bitterly. "I beg your pardon; you must excuse my want of breeding. I don't mix except among people in my own station. I—I didn't mean that," he added hurriedly, as he saw her face flush; "I didn't mean anything to offend you; but I have scarcely been myself, I think, for the last few days."

"You have done no harm," said Daisy, gently, pitying the look of misery on his face.

"Have I done any good?" he asked; "you cannot fail to understand me. If you knew how I suffer, you would keep me no longer in suspense."

"I did not pretend to misunderstand you," said the girl. "You are waiting for my answer to the proposition you made to me when you called at my lodging the other day."

"I am."

"You have placed me—unwillingly, I know—in a very painful position," said Daisy; "for it is really painful to me to have to say or do anything which I feel would give you pain."

"Don't say any more," he said in a hoarse voice; "I can guess your meaning perfectly. Don't say any more."

"But, Mr. Merton, you must hear me—you must understand——"

"I do understand that you say 'no' to what I asked you; that you reject my suit—I believe that is the proper society phrase! I don't want to know," continued he, with a sudden outburst of passion, "of the esteem in which you hold me, and the recollection which you will always have of the delicacy of my behaviour towards you. I know the rubbish with which it is always thought necessary to gild the pill in similar cases; but I'd rather be without it."

"You are becoming incoherent, and I can scarcely follow you," said Daisy, setting her lips and looking very stony. "I don't think I was going to say anything of the kind that you seem to have anticipated. I don't see that I have laid myself open to rudeness because I have been compelled to tell you it didn't suit me to marry you; and as to our being friends hereafter, I really don't think that there is the remotest chance of such a thing."

"I must again beg your pardon, Miss Stafford," said John, taking off his hat—he was quite calm now—"and I will take care that I don't commit myself in any similar ridiculous manner. I am perfectly aware that our lines in life lie very wide apart, and after the decision which you have arrived at and just communicated to me, I can only be glad that it is so; and though we are not to be friends, you say, I shall always have the deepest regard for you. You cannot prevent that, even if you would; and I only trust that some day I may have the chance of proving the continuance of that regard by being able to serve you."

He stopped, bowed, and was striding rapidly away back on the way they had traversed, before Daisy could speak to him.

"More quickly over than I had anticipated," she thought to herself, "and less painful too. I expected at one time there would have been a scene. His face lights up wonderfully when he is in earnest, and if his figure and manner were only as good, he might do. I wonder whether I could put up with him if neither of those two other men had been upon the cards; perhaps so, in a foreign place, such as he talked of going to, where one could have made one's own world and one's own society, and broken with all the old associations. How dreadful his boots were, by-the-way! I don't think it would have been possible to have passed one's life recognised as belonging to such feet and boots."

By this time she had reached Middle Temple Lane, down which she was proceeding, to the great admiration of the barristers' and attorneys' clerks who were flitting about that sombre neighbourhood. After a little difficulty and a great deal

of inquiry she found the Seldon Buildings; and arriving at the second floor, and knocking at the portal inscribed Mr. John Wilson, she rather started when the door was opened to her by Colonel Orpington.

"Pray step in, my dear Miss Stafford," said the Colonel. "You are surprised, I see, to see me here instead of my legal adviser; but the fact is, that gentleman has been called out of town, and as I find he is not likely to return, I thought it best to take his place and make the proposition in my own person."

Daisy was not, nor did she feign to be, astonished. She entered the room and seated herself in an arm-chair, towards which the Colonel motioned her. He sat down opposite to her, and without any preliminary observations, at once dashed into his subject.

"I don't think there is any occasion for me to inform you, my dear Miss Stafford," he commenced, "that I have the very greatest admiration for you. All women known intuitively when they are admired without having the sentiment duly expressed to them in set phrases; and though I have carefully avoided saying or doing any of those ridiculous things which are said and done in novels and plays, but never in real life, except by people who bring actions of breach of promise against each other, you can have had very little doubt of the high appreciation of you which I entertain."

Daisy bowed. The trembling of her lip showed that she was a little nervous—no other sign.

"Well," continued the Colonel, "this admiration and appreciation naturally induced me to think what I could do to better your position, and at the same time to see more of you myself. Your life is not a particularly lively one—in fact, there is no doubt it is deuced hard work, and very little relaxation. You are not meant for this kind of thing. You like books, and flowers, and birds, and all sorts of elegant surroundings. You are so handsome—pardon the reference, but I am talking in a most perfectly business manner—that it is a thorough shame to see you lacking all those et ceteras which are such a help and set-off to beauty; and you are wearing away the very flower

of your youth in what is nothing more nor less than sordid drudgery. At one time I thought—as I believe I mentioned to you—of purchasing some business, such as that in which you are now engaged, and putting you at the head—making yourself, in point of fact, and placing you in the position occupied by Madame Clarisse. But after a good deal of reflection I have come to the conclusion, and I think you will agree, that there would not be much good in such a project. You see, though you would be your own mistress, and would not be obliged to get up so early or to work so late, you would still be engaged in exactly the same kind of employment; you would be at the mercy of the caprices of horrible old women and insolent young girls, and would have to fetch and carry, and kotoo, and eat humble-pie, and all the rest of it, very much as you do at present. And I am perfectly certain, my dear Fanny," —she gave a little start, which had not passed unnoticed; it was the first time he had called her so—"I am perfectly certain that this is not your *métier*. You are a lady in looks—there is no higher-bred-looking woman goes to Court, by Jove!—in education, in manner, and in taste; you are not meant for contact with the shopocracy, and it wouldn't suit you; and to tell you the truth, I am sufficiently selfish to have thought how it would suit me, and I confess I don't see it at all."

He looked hard at her as he said this, and she returned his glance. Her colour rose, and her lips trembled visibly.

"I am perfectly candid with you, my dear child," said the Colonel, drawing his chair a little closer to her, and leaning with his elbow on the table so as to bring his face nearer to her —"I am perfectly candid in avowing a certain amount of selfishness in this matter. I admire you very much indeed, and the natural result is, a desire to see as much of you as is consistent with my duties to society; and this shopkeeping project wouldn't help me at all. I want you to have all your time to yourself—a perpetual leisure, to be employed according to your own devices. I wish you to have the prettiest home that can be found, with pictures, and books, and flowers, and such-like. I wish you to have your carriage, and a riding-horse, if you would like one, and a maid to attend to you, and

a proper allowance for dress and all that kind of thing. You look incredulous, Fanny, and as though I were inventing a romance. It is perfectly practicable and possible, my dear child, and it shall all be done for you if you will only like me just a little."

He bent forward and took her hand, and looked up eagerly into her face.

She suffered her hand to remain in his grasp, and gazed at him quite steadily as she said in hard tones :

"It sounds like a fairy-tale ; but it is in fact a mere business-like proposition skilfully veiled. You wish me to be your mistress."

Colonel Orpington was not staggered either by the tone or the words, but smiled quietly, still holding her hand as he said :

"I told you I admired your appreciation and quickness, though I wish to Heaven you had not used that horrible word. I never had a mistress in my life. I always associate the term with a dreadful person with painted cheeks and blackened eyelids, and a very low-necked dress. I can't conceive any object more utterly revolting."

"I am sorry you dislike the term," said Daisy, "but I conclude I expressed your meaning."

"It would be better put thus," said the Colonel : "I wish you to let me be your lover, and show my regard by attending to your comfort and happiness. That seems to me rather neatly put."

Daisy could not help smiling as she said :

"It is certainly less startling in that shape."

"My dear child," said the Colonel, releasing her hand, and standing upright on the hearth-rug before her, "it conveys exactly what I meant to say. A young man would rave and stamp, and swear he had never loved anyone before, and would never love anyone again. I can't say the first, by Jove !" said the Colonel with a grin ; "and I could not take upon myself to swear to the last, we are such creatures of chance and circumstances. But it wouldn't matter to you, for by that time you would probably be tired of me, and I should take care to have

secured your independence; but at all events I should be very kind to you, and you would have pretty well your own way."

There was a pause, after which the Colonel said:

"You are silent, Fanny; what do you say?"

"You cannot expect me," said Fanny, rising from her chair, "to give a decided 'Yes' or 'No' to this proposition of yours, however delicately you may have veiled it. You see I am as candid with you as you were with me. You have had no shrieks of horror, no exclamations of startled propriety, and I conclude you did not expect them; but it is a matter which I must think over, and let you know the result."

"Exactly what I expected from your common sense, my dear child. My appreciation of you is higher than ever. When shall I hear?"

"If I don't write to you before, I will be here this day week at this time."

"So be it," said the Colonel, and he led her to the door. As she passed, he touched her forehead with his lips, and so they parted.

"I suppose I ought to be in a whirl of terror, fright, and shame," said Daisy to herself, as she walked towards the West; "but I feel none of these sensations. It is a matter which will require a great deal of thinking about, and must have very careful attention."

CHAPTER XXIII.

POOR PAUL.

IT is eleven o'clock in the morning on the first day of Paul's return to work, and business in the Principal Registrar's room at H.M. Stannaries is in full swing.

Mr. Courtney has just arrived, and is seated before the brightly-burning fire—the old gentleman used to harass the souls of the messengers in reference to this fire—reading *The Morning Post.* He looks much better for his holiday, and is wigged, and curled, and buckled, and girthed, and generally got up as much as ever.

George Wainwright is seated at his desk, with several sheets of manuscript before him, which he is scoring through with a pencil, and annotating marginally; from time to time uttering contemptuous grunts of "Pshaw!" and "Stuff!" and "No nominative case," greatly to the disgust of Mr. Billy Dunlop, who is the author of the work in course of supervision.

Mr. Dunlop, whose commencement of his official duties consists hitherto in his having made one large blot on a sheet of foolscap, and newly nibbed a quill pen, whistles softly to himself as he regards the work of demolition going on, and mutters in an undertone, "Ursa Major is going it this morning. I shall have all that infernal *précis* to write over again."

And Paul Derinzy is seated at his desk, but he has not even attempted the pretext of doing any work.

His chin is resting on his hands, and he is gazing straight before him, looking across at George, but not seeing him in the least, for his thoughts are busily engaged elsewhere. George Wainwright is the first to speak.

"I can't compliment you on your effort, my dear Billy," said he laughing, and looking across to Mr. Dunlop. "I don't think I have come across a production in which there was such an entire absence of sense, grammar, and cohesion as this *précis* of yours, which you have made of the Falmouth collector's report."

"All right, sir," said Mr. Dunlop. "Cut away by all means, don't mind me; sharpen your great wit, and make me the block. What says the poet? 'Great wit to madness often is allied;' and as that is all in your line, fire away."

"What is that you are saying, my dear George?" said Mr. Courtney, looking up from his newspaper. "Our good friend Dunlop been unsuccessful in his praiseworthy attempt?"

"So far as I can see, sir, from the manner in which my dear George's pencil has been at work, our good friend Dunlop seems to have gone a regular mucker with his praiseworthy attempt,"

said Mr. Dunlop; "and had I any doubt upon the subject, my dear George is good enough to express his opinion of my humble endeavours with a frankness and outspoken candour which do him credit."

"Here, catch hold!" cried George, grinning as he twisted the sheets together, and throwing them across to Billy. "Copy my corrections exactly, and we shall be able to drag you into the first class, and get you your promotion as the reward of merit before you are seventy years old. Fire away, Billy; get on with it at once."

Mr. Dunlop took the papers, placed them before him, and dipped his pen in the ink; but before writing, he looked up with a serio-comic air, and said, "May I be permitted to ask, sir, why the work in this room is to be entirely confined to one of the junior clerks; and why the other, a gentleman who has the advantage of having just returned from the country, where he has enjoyed fresh air, and no doubt exercise, and freedom from that official labour which is the curse of fallen man—why this gentleman is permitted to sit staring vacantly before him, folding his hands like the celebrated slothful person immortalised by Dr. Watts?"

This remark was unheard by Paul; but when Mr. Courtney addressed him, he started and looked up.

"Yes, by-the-way, my dear boy," said the old gentleman, "I, as well as our friend Dunlop, have remarked that you seem scarcely to have benefited by your holiday; there is a kind of want of tone about you, I notice. Your people's place is in Dorsetshire, is it not? Relaxing, eh, and that kind of thing? House full of company, no doubt; shooting all day; billiards, private theatricals, flirtations, and that kind of thing. Doesn't do, my dear boy! doesn't do for men like us, who are all the rest of the year engaged in official drudgery; doesn't do, depend upon it."

And here Mr. Courtney laid down *The Morning Post*, and proceeded to commence his private correspondence.

"Oh, I'm all right, Chief," said Paul; "a little tired after my journey, perhaps—that's all; a little too smoke-dried by old George over there, for we got a carriage to ourselves, and I

think his pipe was blazing all the way to town." Then turning to Dunlop, "I'll walk into the work presently, Billy, and you'll be able to take some leave, if you want any."

"No, thank you, old man," said Billy Dunlop; "I don't want to be away till just after Christmas. Within the month following that festive day, the number of persons engaged in trade who have a small amount to make up by a given period is extraordinary; and I feel it my duty to go into the country about that time, in order that no one may indulge any delusive hopes of pecuniary assistance from me."

After a few minutes George Wainwright stepped across to Paul's desk, and leaning over it, said in a low voice, "What's the matter? Nothing fresh since your arrival?"

"No, nothing at all," said Paul, in the same tone. "I found a note from her at the club, saying that she would meet me this afternoon, and expressed surprise at my having imagined that there had been any decrease in the warmth of her feelings for me, that's all."

"And what makes you so horribly downcast?"

"I cannot tell; I have a sense of oppression over me which I find it impossible to shake off. I had an idea that the mere fact of my return to London, the knowledge that I was so much nearer to her, would have dispersed it; but this morning it seems worse than ever. I think some of it is due to a certain feeling of remorse which I felt on parting with my mother yesterday; she seemed so horribly grieved about the failure of that other business, you know."

"I think you may acquit yourself entirely on that score," said George, looking earnestly at his friend, "as I shall probably be able to prove to you before long."

"What do you mean?" said Paul, in astonishment; "how can you know anything about it?"

"Impossible for me to say just now," replied George; "control your curiosity for yet a short time longer, and you shall know. Meanwhile you may depend on what I have said to you. I only wish you were as well out of this other affair."

No more was said on the subject, and Paul worked on as

best he might, impervious to the sarcasms which his occasional fits of musing evoked from Mr. Dunlop.

Soon after two o'clock he closed his blotting-book, and asked the Chief's leave to go away; alleging with a laugh that he had scarcely got acclimatised to the place, and that he must slide into his work by degrees.

Good-natured Mr. Courtney of course assented, and after the performance of a rapid toilet, Paul hurried away.

The depression under which he laboured still continued in its fullest force, and he could not help contrasting his present feelings with those which animated him in the first days of his acquaintance with Daisy. Then all was bright and roseate; now all was dull and dark. His ideas as to the future were indeed no more definite then than they were now; but the haze which hung over it then and shrouded it from his view was a light summer mist; not so now—a dense gloomy fog. And she was changed; he feared there could be no doubt of that. In a few minutes he should be able to ascertain whether there was any foundation for his suspicions; in the meantime he indulged them to the fullest extent. The tone of her letters had certainly altered. The letters themselves were written as though she were preoccupied at the time, and read like mere perfunctory performances, executed under a sense of duty, and finished with a sigh of relief.

What should have changed her? Most men would have supposed at once, on finding an alteration in the tone and manner of the woman they love, that she had been receiving attentions in some other quarter. Paul hesitated to do this; not that he was not aware of the power of Daisy's beauty and attractiveness, nor entirely because of his faith in her, but principally because they had gone on for a certain number of months together, during all which time she must have had innumerable chances of throwing him over and behaving falsely to him had she been so disposed; while all the time she had kept true to him.

Les absents ont toujours tort, says the proverb. Could that have been the reason? What woman was to be trusted? How mad it was of him to leave her for so long! It was only in

order to satisfy his mother, and to show her how impossible it was for him to comply with this project which she had so long cherished for his future, that he had consented to go down to Devonshire. By-the-way, what was that that George had hinted at? "There need be no remorse on his part," George had said about the refusal to fulfil his mother's wishes in regard to marrying Annette. What could he have meant? Was it possible that his friend had really been taken with the girl? He had some notion of the kind down at Beachborough, but had dismissed it from his mind as unworthy serious considera tion. Now there really seemed to be some foundation for the notion, and Annette certainly cared for him. Fancy them married! How jolly it would be! What a capital husband George would make, and what a pleasant house it would be to go to! Fancy "old George" tremendously rich, with a lot of money, going in to give swell parties, and all that kind of thing! No, he could not fancy that; whatever income he had, George would always remain the same glorious, simple-minded, honest, splendid fellow that he was now.

Poor old *mater!* how awfully she seemed to take his decision to heart! She said this had been her pet project for so many years, and it was hard to see it overthrown at last. George wouldn't do as well, you suppose? No; it was for her own boy, her own darling, the *spes gregis*, that she wanted the wealth and the position; as though that would be the least value, if there were not happiness. His mother didn't seem to understand that, and how could he have any happiness without Daisy? Oh, confound it! there, he had run off that track of thought for a few minutes, and had a small respite; and now he was on it again, and as miserable as ever.

Turning over these thoughts in his mind, Paul Derinzy hurried through the streets and across the Park, and speedily reached the well-known place of meeting. It was a sharp bright day in the early winter. The leaves were off the trees now, and there was an uninterrupted view for many hundred yards. Paul gazed eagerly about him, but could see nothing of Daisy. Usually, to the discredit of his gallantry, she had been first to arrive; now she was not there, although the time for

meeting was past; and Paul took it as a bad omen, and his heart sank within him.

He took two or three turns up and down the dreary avenue, and at length Daisy appeared in sight. He hurried to meet her, and as she approached him he could not help being struck with her marvellous beauty.

Paul would have sworn, had he been asked—but her face was ever present to him during the time of his absence—that he felt that he must have forgotten it, or she must have wonderfully improved, so astonished was he at her appearance. She had been walking fast, and a splendid colour glowed in her cheeks. Her eyes were unusually bright too; her dress, which was always neat and in excellent taste, seemed to Paul to be made of some richer and softer material than she was in the habit of wearing. She smiled pleasantly at him as he neared her, and all his gloom for a time melted away.

"My own, my darling!" that was all he said, as he took both her hands in his, and looked down lovingly into her eyes.

"I am a little late, Paul, I am afraid," said Daisy; "but Madame had something particular to be done, and as she has been very good in giving me holidays lately, I did not like to pass the work which she wished me to do to anyone else."

"Never mind, pet; you are here at last, and I am in heaven," said Paul. "How splendidly handsome you look, Daisy! What have you been doing?"

"Nothing, that I know of, in particular," said the girl, "beyond having a little less work and a little more fresh air. Rest and exercise have been my sole cosmetics."

"Holidays and fresh air, eh, miss?" said Paul, smiling rather grimly; "and you never could get an hour to come out with me, Daisy!"

"Because it was in the height of the season, when our work was incessant from morning till night, that you were good enough to ask me, Mr. Douglas," said Daisy, making a little *moue.*

"And when I am away you find time to go out."

"Exactly," said Daisy. "There, isn't this delicious? You

were away on a holiday yourself, and I believe you are actually annoyed because during your highness's absence I managed to enjoy myself."

"No, no, Daisy; you mustn't accuse me of that," said Paul; "I am not so selfish as all that! However, never mind. Tell me now all you have been doing."

"No; do you first tell me how you have been enjoying yourself. Were 'your people,' as you call them, very glad to see you; and did they make much of you, as in duty bound?"

There was, whether intentionally or not, a slight inflection of sarcasm in her tone which jarred upon Paul's nerves.

"They were very glad to see me, and made much of me in the only way parents can do," said he quietly. "I often think how foolishly, worse than foolishly, we behave while we have them with us, and only recognise our proper duty to them when it is too late."

"Ye-es," said Daisy, struggling to repress a yawn. She was thinking of something else very different from filial duty, and was beginning to be bored.

"You do not seem to enter into those sentiments," said Paul; "but that is because you have no parents."

"Perhaps so," said the girl; "but even if I had, I scarcely think I should be tempted to gush; gushing is very much out of my line."

Paul looked at her strangely. He had never heard her so hard, so cold, so sardonic before.

"No," he said, after a moment's pause; "you generally manage to have a wonderful control of your feelings; it only needed one to look through your recent letters to prove that."

"What was the matter with my letters?" said Daisy, looking up at him so bewitchingly at that moment that all Paul's anger vanished.

"The matter with them! Nothing, my darling, except that I thought they were a little cold; but perhaps that was my fault."

"How do you mean your fault?"

"Perhaps I ought not to have gone away, to have left you for so long."

"My dear Paul, what are you thinking of? What possible claim have I on you, that you should deprive yourself of a holiday and give up visiting your friends on my account?"

"What claim have you! The claim of being dearer to me than any person in the world; the claim of being the one creature for whom I care beyond all others. Can there be a greater claim than this?"

She looked at him quietly and almost pityingly as she said:

"I thought you would have given up all this romantic nonsense, Paul; I thought you would have come back infinitely more rational and practical than you were when you left."

"I suppose that is what you pride yourself on having become," said Paul, with a dash of bitterness in his tone; "'rational' and 'practical,' and 'romantic nonsense!' You didn't call it by that name when we used to walk in this place but a very few weeks ago."

"It was different then," said Daisy, looking round with a shudder.

"It was, indeed," said Paul. "There is something gone besides leaves from the trees."

"And what is that?" asked Daisy, provokingly.

"Love from you and hope from me," said Paul. Then, with a sudden access of passion: "Oh, my darling!" he cried, "my own love, Daisy, why are you behaving thus to me? For the last few days I have felt certain that something was impending. I have had a dull, dead weight on my spirits. I attributed it to the difference in the tone of your letters, but I thought that would all be dispelled when we met. I had no idea it would be as bad as this."

The girl looked up at him steadily, but seemed to be rather angered than touched at this sudden outburst.

"My dear Paul," said she, "I am again compelled to ask you to be at least rational. What could you have expected would have been the end of our acquaintance?"

"The end!" cried Paul. "I—I never thought about that; I never thought that there would be an end."

"Exactly," said Daisy; "and yet you wonder at my accusing you of want of practicality. Let us go through this matter

quietly. You seek and make my acquaintance; you appear to admire me very much, and ask for opportunities of meeting me; these opportunities you have, and you then profess to be deeply in love with me. All this is very nice; we walk and talk like young people in the old story-books. But there is a strong spice of worldliness mixed up with the simplicity of both of us: all the time that you are talking and saying your sweetest things you are in a desperate fright lest any of your acquaintances shall see you. I am perfectly keen enough to notice this; and when I tax you with it, you confess it sheepishly, and as good as tell me that it would be impossible for you, on account of your family, to enter into any lasting alliance with a milliner's assistant. Now, what on earth do you propose to yourself, my dear Paul, or did you propose, when you came here to meet me just now? You have had plenty of time to think over this affair down in the country, and have, I suppose, arrived at some intention; or did you possibly suppose that we could go on mooning away our lives as we have done during the past six months?"

She stopped; and Paul, finding she expected some reply, said hesitatingly:

"I—I thought it would go on just the same."

"You are a very child, my dear Paul," said Daisy, "not to see that such a thing is impossible. If, before you left town, you had spoken at all distinctly as regards the future, if you had asked me to marry you—not now, I don't say immediately, but in the course of a certain given time—matters would have stood very differently."

"You say if I *had* asked you," said Paul, with an appealing glance at her. "Suppose I were to ask you now?"

"It would be too late," said Daisy, with a short laugh. Then, suddenly changing her tone, she cried, "Do you imagine that, in what I have just said, I was spelling for you to make me an offer? Do you imagine that I would so demean myself? Do you think that I have no pride? I can tell you, I should feel I was doing quite as great an honour to your family by coming into it as they could possibly do to me by receiving me nto it. Do you imagine that I was not merely going calmly to

wait until it pleased your highness to throw the handkerchief in my direction, but that I was actually making signs to attract your attention to my eager desire for preferment?"

"Daisy, Daisy," interrupted Paul, "what are you saying?"

"Simply the truth; I am speaking out what we both of us know to be true. There is no good shilly-shallying any longer this way, Paul Douglas; we are neither of us so very childlike, we are both of us out of our teens, and we live in a world where Strephon and Daphne will find themselves horribly out of place."

There was a pause for a few moments, and then Paul said in a low voice:

"You must pardon me, Daisy, if I don't answer you straight at once and to the purpose. It is rather a facer for a fellow who has gone away and left a girl, as he imagines, very much attached to him, and certainly most loving and affectionate in her words and manner, to find her, on his return, perfectly changed, and talking about being practical and rational, and that kind of thing. I daresay I was a fool; I daresay you thought I was giving myself airs when I talked about my family, and kept in this secluded part of the Park in order that we might not run the risk of meeting anybody I knew. God knows I didn't intend so, child; God knows I would have done nothing that I thought could have wounded your feelings in the very slightest degree. You say that if I had spoken to you before I left town about marrying you, matters would have stood differently. The truth is, until I went out of town, until I was far away from you and knew I was beyond your reach, until I felt that never-ceasing want of your society and companionship, that ever-present desire to hear your voice and take your hand and look into your darling eyes, I did not know how much I was in love with you. I know it now, Daisy, I feel it all now, and the idea of having to pass the remainder of my life without you drives me mad. You won't let it come to this, Daisy—oh, my own darling one, you won't let it come to this!"

His voice trembled as he spoke these last words, and he was

strangely agitated. There was real pity, and perhaps a little look of love, in Daisy's eyes, but she only said :

"My dear Paul, sooner or later it must come to this. Even were there no other reasons, it would be impossible for me to accept an offer of marriage which it might be truly said I have literally wrung from you. If you love me very much—there, you need not protest ; we will allow that to pass, and take it for granted that you do—you are desperately spooney upon me, as the phrase is, Paul ; but how long will you continue in that state? and when the first force of your passion is spent and past, you will find yourself tied to a wife who, as you will not fail to say to yourself—you don't think so now, but there is no doubt about it—insisted on your marrying her."

"I should not have been cad enough to think any such thing !" cried Paul.

"You would always be too much of a gentleman to say it, I know," said Daisy, "but you could not help thinking it ; and the mere knowledge that you thought it would distress me beyond measure. No, Paul, it would not do ; depend upon it, it would not do."

"Do you mean to tell me, then," said Paul, in a trembling voice, "that you have finally decided in this matter?"

"I have."

"And your decision is——"

"That it will be better for us to say good-bye, and part as friends."

"And you—you will not marry me, Daisy?"

"Under the circumstances I cannot, Paul. What I might have done, had the proposal been made at a different time and in a different way, I cannot tell ; but coming as it has, it is impossible."

"And do you think I am weak enough not to see through all this?" cried Paul furiously. "Do you think I am so slow of hearing or so uninterested in what you say that I did not catch the words, 'even if there were not other reasons,' when you first began to explain why you could not accept my offer ; and do you think it is not palpable to me at once what those 'other reasons' are? You have been playing the false during my

absence; your woman's vanity is so great that, knowing me as you do, being fully aware of the love, passion, call it what you will, that I had for you, you couldn't even remain content with that during the few weeks I was away, but must get some fresh admirer to minister to it!"

"Paul—Mr. Douglas!" cried Daisy.

"I will speak—I will be heard! This is the last chance I shall have, and I will avail myself of it. You have wrecked my life and destroyed all my hopes, and yet you think that I am to make no protest against all that you have done! All the time that I was away I was wearing you in my heart, checking off with delight the death of each day which brought nearer the hour of my return to you; and now I have returned to find you sneer at those relations between us which made me so happy, and bidding me be practical, rational; bidding me, in point of fact, though not in words, abjure all my love and give you up contentedly, see you go to someone else. It is too hard, it is too hard, Daisy! You cannot force this upon me."

He seized her hand and looked imploringly into her eyes.

The girl made no attempt to withdraw her hand, it remained passively within his; but his passionate manner met no response in her glance, and the tones of her voice were calm and unbroken as she said:

"I see now, more than ever, how right I was in my determination. I accused you of being childish, and you have proved yourself so, far more thoroughly than I had anticipated. Seeing the chance of your toy being taken away from you, you consent to do what before you would never have thought of, in order to secure it. You scold, and abuse, and beg, and implore in the same breath: almost in the same sentence you declare your love for me and insult me; a continuance of such a state of things would be impossible. We had better shake hands and part."

During this speech she had withdrawn her hand, but at the close she offered it to him again.

Paul Derinzy, however, drew himself up; for an instant he seemed as though about to speak to her, but it was evident he doubted his power of self-command, his eyes filled with tears,

and his under-lip trembled visibly. Then with a strong effort he recovered himself, took off his hat, and making a formal bow, hurried away.

"It would never have done," said Daisy, looking after him. Then, as she started on her homeward walk, she said, "It would have been neither one thing nor the other; a kind of genteel poverty. Unrecognised by his relations, he would soon have sickened of that kind of life, and I should have been left to my own devices, to mope and pine at home or amuse myself abroad; in either case, a very undesirable mode of life. My vanity Paul talked about, that could not live without another admirer! Poor fellow, he wasn't right there. It wasn't vanity; it was a craving for luxury and position that first led me to listen to this man. I have to give him my answer by the end of the week. I don't think there is much doubt as to what it will be."

A loud cry interrupted her thoughts just at this moment, and looking up, she saw a carriage, drawn by a pair of splendid horses, turning into the street that she was about to cross. The coachman and footman sitting on the box called out to warn her of her danger, and as she sprang back, they looked at her and laughed insolently. A woman, handsome and young, and splendidly dressed in sables, lay back in the barouche, and looked at the girl, who was covered with a mud-shower whirling from the wheels, with a glance half of pity, half of contempt.

Daisy's face was ablaze in an instant.

"I have been a poverty-stricken drudge long enough," she said. "Now I will ride in my own carriage, and stop all chance of insults such as these."

CHAPTER XXIV.

GEORGE'S DETERMINATION.

PAUL DERINZY'S was not the only perturbed spirit in the Principal Registrar's room of the Stannaries Office. To his own extreme astonishment, George Wainwright found that his equable spirits and calm philosophic temperament had entirely deserted him, and that he had become silent, moody, and, he was afraid, sometimes irritable. He knew perfectly the cause of this change, and did not attempt to disguise it from himself. He knew that he was suffering from that malady which sooner or later attacks us all, and which, like many other maladies, is more safely got over and disposed of when it comes upon us in youth. That period had passed with George Wainwright. He shook his head rather grimly as he surveyed in the glass the brown crisp hair, already beginning to be sprinkled with gray, and the lines round the mouth and eyes, which seemed to have increased at such a confoundedly quick rate lately; and he did not attempt to fight with the malady. He seemed to confess that he could make no head against it, and that his best plan was to succumb to its force, and let it do with him as it would.

"It has come to me somewhat late in life, and I suppose it is the worse on that account," said honest old George to himself; "but I see plainly there is no use in attempting to resist it, and that mine may be looked upon as a settled case. Strange, too, how it has all come about that my going down into Devonshire to rescue Paul from a scrape should have been the cause of my falling into one myself, and into a far more helpless one than that out of which he wanted my help. He has, at all events, the resources of hope. Time may soften the parental anger; and even if it does not, he can afford to set it at defiance, so far as Annette is concerned; while as for Daisy, as he calls her, if he chooses to ignore conventionality, and

what the world will think, and Mrs. Grundy will say—and it doesn't seem to me to be a very hard task to do that, though harder perhaps for a dashing young fellow like him than a middle-aged hermit like myself—he may marry the girl, and, like the people in the story-books, live happy ever after. But my look-out is very different. I have examined mine own heart. God knows, with as much strict search as I could bring to bear upon it, and I feel that, so far as Annette is concerned, I am irretrievably—— And I never thought I could love anyone at all in this kind of way. I am perfectly certain that I shall never love anyone else; and therein lies the utter hopelessness of the case. I buoy myself up with the belief that this darling child is, I may almost say, attached to me—that she feels for me what in another person would be affection and attachment. She says that I understand her better than anyone else; and that she is happier in my society than in that of any other person. What more could the wisest among us say to show their preference? And yet the hopelessness, the utter hopelessness! That conversation with my father has left no doubt on my mind that he, at all events, regards her malady as incurable; and though the fact of my comprehending her so thoroughly might possibly have some good effect upon her disease, and at all events would tend to mitigate and soften her affliction, any thought of marriage with her would be impossible. Even I myself, who am regarded, I know, by these lads at the office as a kind of social iconoclast, stand aghast at the idea, and at once acknowledge my terror of Mrs. Grundy's remark. And yet it seems so hard to give her up. My life, which was such a happy one, in its quiet, and what might almost be called its solitude, seems to attend me no more. I am restless and uneasy; I find no solace in my books or my work, and have even neglected poor *maman*, so occupied are my thoughts with this one subject. I cannot shake it off, I cannot rid myself of its influence. It is ever present on my mind, and unless something happens to effect a radical change in my state, I shall knock myself up and be ill. I feel that coming upon me to a certainty. A good sharp travel is the only thing which would be of any use: the remedy experienced by the man of

whom my father is so fond of talking—who found relief from the utter prostration and misery which he underwent at the death of his only son by the intense study of mathematics—would not help me one atom. I cannot apply my mind—or what I call my mind—to anything just now. The figure of this girl comes between me and the paper; her voice is always ringing in my ears; her constrained eager regard, gradually melting into quiet confidence, is ever before me: and, in fact, I begin to feel myself a thorough specimen of an old fool hopelessly in love."

George Wainwright judged no man harshly but himself. When he appeared at the bar of his own tribunal, he conducted the cross-examination with Spartan sternness; and this was the result—he saw the impossibility of fighting against the passion which had obtained such mastery over him; and he had almost made up his mind to seek safety in flight—to plead ill-health, and to go away from England on some prolonged travel—when an incident occurred which altered his determination.

One morning he was sitting at his desk at the Stannaries Office, mechanically opening his correspondence and arranging the papers before him—as usual he had been the first to arrive, and none of his colleagues were present—when Paul Derinzy entered the room. George noticed with regret that his friend's appearance had altered very much for the worse during the last few days. His face looked wan and peaked, his usual sallow complexion had changed to a dead-white, and the expression of his eyes was dull and lustreless. There never was much power of work in Paul; but there had been next to nothing lately. George had noticed him sitting at his desk, his eyes bent vacantly on the paper before him, his thoughts evidently very far away. Since their return, there has not been very much interchange of confidence between them; but George knows perfectly well that matters are not going quite straight in Paul's relations with Daisy, and that the lad is spiritless and miserable in consequence. George Wainwright's great heart would at any time have compassionated his friend's position; but under

present circumstances he was especially able to appreciate and sympathise with the position.

"At it as usual, George," said Paul, after the first curt salutation. "How you have the heart to stick to this confounded grind in the way you do, quite beats me. I begin to loathe the place, and the papers, and all the infernal lot." And with an indignant sweep of his arm he cleared a space in front of him, and resting his face on his hands, sat contemplating his friend.

"Begin to loathe, my dear Paul?" said George, with a slight smile; "I thought you had progressed pretty well long ago in your hatred to the state of life to which you have been called. Yes, I am grinding away as usual, and indeed have put a little extra power on just now."

"What!" said Paul, with a look of disgust at a large array of tape-tied official documents neatly spread out before his friend; "are those infernal papers heavier than ever?"

"No, not that," said George; "there seems to be about the usual number of them; but I want to make a clearance, and not to leave the slightest arrear when I go away."

"Go away!" repeated Paul. "What do you mean? You have only just returned; you don't mean to say you are going away again?"

"That is really delicious," said George; "you, who have had your full six weeks' leave, turn round and fling my poor little fortnight in my teeth. Yes, I actually purpose taking the remainder of my holiday; a great crime, no doubt, but one which must be excused under special circumstances. I am a little overworked, and not a little out of sorts; and I find I must get away at once."

"Not at once," said Paul, with a half-comic look at his friend; "I don't think I would go away just now, if I were you."

"Why not?" asked George.

"Because you might miss seeing some people for whom you have, as I believe, a great regard," said Paul, with the same quaint expression.

"And they are——"

"My people. If the fashionable chronicler took any notice of them, he would probably report: 'We understand that Captain and Mrs. Derinzy, accompanied by their niece Miss Annette Derinzy, will shortly arrive at 94, Queen Anne Street, Cavendish Square, from their marine residence, The Tower, Beachborough, Dorsetshire.'"

"You are chaffing, I suppose," said George, who had laid down his paper, and was looking up eagerly.

"Not the least in the world; I never was more serious in my life."

"Do you mean to say that they are coming to town, then?"

"I do, indeed. I had a letter from my mother this morning; in it she says that she requires change; but by what I gather from the context, I have a strong notion that the corruption of good manners by evil communications has taken place. Which, being interpreted, means this: that since you and I were down there, and fanned the governor's reminiscences of London and his previous life into a flame, he has grown so unbearable, that my mother has been forced to knock under to him, and intends bringing him up, to let him have the slightest suspicion of a fling."

"Exactly," said George; "I daresay you are right."

"And there is another view of the question, in which I fancy I am right too. It has long struck me that my mother's reason for keeping Annette in such strict seclusion, carrying her away to that ghastly place down there, and never letting anyone see her, was that she might be kept from all temptation in the shape of other young men, and grow up solely and entirely for me, my behoof and purposes. It seems to me tolerably plain now, that since our visit down there my mother sees that this notable plan is knocked on the head; as there is no chance of my marrying my cousin, the necessity for keeping her in seclusion no longer exists; and therefore she is to be brought to London, and allowed, to a certain extent, to mix in society; and I think I know someone, old man," continued Paul, looking with a kindly smile towards his friend, "who will not be displeased at that result, however it may have been brought about."

He was surprised to see George Wainwright turn suddenly pale, and to mark the tremulous tones of voice, as he said:

"You are a good fellow, Paul, and my own dear friend, to whom I can talk with all perfect frankness and honesty. I have never mentioned this matter to you before, never offered you my confidence on the subject, although I guessed from your manner once or twice, while down at The Tower, that you had some idea of my attachment to your cousin. I am sure I need not tell you, who know me so well, that, so long as there was the remotest chance of any alliance between you and her, even though it had been what, in the jargon of the world, is called a marriage of convenience, and not one in which on either side affection is supposed to have a part, I should never have dreamed of interposing any obstacle, or of even allowing myself to entertain any strong feeling towards her. I say that boldly now, for I think at that time I could have exercised sufficient self-restraint, had there been occasion for it, though now, God knows, my affection for her is quite beyond my control."

He paused for a moment, and Paul took advantage of the opportunity to rise from his seat, and walking round the desk, to lay his hand affectionately on his friend's broad shoulders.

"Of course, I know that, old man; of course, I know that you are the soul of honour and truth, and that you would have eaten your heart quietly, and never said a word. But there is no occasion for all that now, thank Heaven! I am in a nice mess with my business; but there's no reason why you shouldn't be happy."

"My dear Paul, any future for me and Annette together is impossible."

"What utter rubbish! I am perfectly confident of my own power of squaring my mother, and bringing her to see the thing in a proper light, now that she knows that there is no chance with me; and the governor's sure to follow as a matter of course; or supposing they remained obstinate, and refuse to give their consent, Annette loses her fortune, that's all. You've got quite enough to keep her in amply sufficient style;

and for the matter of that, some time or other the money must come to me, and you and she should have as much of it as you liked—all of it, if you wanted it. Money's no good to me, poor miserable beggar that I am."

"It is not a question of money, Paul, or of Mrs. Derinzy's consent; there's something very far worse behind—something which I discovered when we were down at Beachborough together, and which I have hitherto kept back from you, partly because the revelation of it could do no good, and partly because I had a certain delicacy in telling you of what must, I fear, deprive certain persons of a portion of the estimation in which they have hitherto held me."

"Go on," said Paul quickly; "I haven't the least idea of what you mean."

"There was another reason," said George, "for keeping your cousin secluded in the country besides that which you have named. I had some faint glimmering of it when I first arrived at The Tower, and I heard of your mother's illness and my father's periodical visits. Before I left, I took means to verify my suspicions; and since I returned to town, I have had an opportunity of confirming them. Beyond question or doubt, your cousin Annette is the victim of a mental disorder. Paul, she is—that I, above all men, should have to tell you!—she is mad!"

"Good God!" cried Paul Derinzy, starting to his feet, "you are mad yourself to talk so!—Whose authority have you for this statement?"

"The best of all," said George Wainwright, sadly. "The authority of the physician in attendance upon her—the authority is my own father. This comes to supplement my own experience and my own observation. There is no doubt about it, Paul; would to God there was!"

"And my mother—she must have known all this—she could not possibly have been ignorant of it!" cried Paul.

George Wainwright was silent.

"And she would have let me marry Annette without any revelation of the mystery, for the sake of that wretched money; she would have embittered my future, and rendered the rest

of my life hopeless and miserable. What a shameful conspiracy! What a base and wicked plot!"

"Hush, Paul!" said George Wainwright, laying his hand on his arm; "recollect of whom you are speaking."

"It is that that makes it all the worse," cried Paul. "To think that she, my mother, should have been so besotted by the hope of greed as to shut her eyes to all the misery which she was heaping up in store for me. It is too horrible to think of. What a narrow chance I had! What a providential escape!"

"Yes," said George, in a low voice, "you have escaped."

There was something in his friend's tone which touched Paul's heart at once.

"What a selfish brute I am," he cried, "to have been thinking of myself and to have forgotten you! How much worse it is for you than for me! My dear George, I never cared for Annette, and set my affections elsewhere; so that beyond the pity which I naturally feel for her, and the shock which I have experienced in learning that my mother could have been so shortsighted and so culpable, there is nothing to touch me in the matter. But you—you loved her for herself; you won her; for I never saw her take to or be interested in anyone so much before; and now you have to give her up."

George's face was buried in his hands. He groaned heavily, but he said nothing.

"Is there no hope?" asked Paul; "no hope of any cure? Is she irrecoverably insane?"

"My father seems to say so," said George, looking up. "I had a long interview with him the other day; told him the whole story, and confided to him all my feelings. He was kindness itself; but he gave me no hope."

"But, good heavens, it seems so wonderful! Here one sees her walking about, and talking in an ordinary manner, and yet you tell me that she is mad!"

"We only have seen her at her best times, my dear Paul. No one has seen her at her worst, except perhaps my father and Mrs. Stothard. These intermittent fits are, they tell me, a very bad sign. The chance were better, if the illness were more constant and protracted."

"It is too horrible!" cried Paul again. "George, what will you do?"

"Bear it, my boy," said his friend; "bear it as I have done things before now, and get on as best I can. I thought of going away, to endeavour in change by the excitement of travel to get rid of the thoughts which are now constantly occupying my mind, and I hope to return in a healthier state. But what you have just told me has altered my plan. The notion of seeing her once again, and speedily, has taken possession of me, and I confess I am not strong enough to fight against it. When do they come up to town?"

"At once, I believe. My mother says the governor's temper is unbearable, and that her only hope of any peace and comfort lies in bringing him to London. You will remain to see them?"

"Yes. As I said before, I cannot resist the temptation."

"Perhaps there may be hope even yet," said Paul. "Every one noticed how much better she was in health and spirits when in your society."

"I fear that improvement will not be permanent," said George, shaking his head sadly. "There was but one chance, and we seem to have lost even that."

"What was it?" asked Paul.

"Well, there was a German doctor named Hildebrand, who lived at Dorrendorf, who achieved a wonderful reputation for his treatment in cases of mania. Even my father—who had had long disputations and polemical controversies with him, carried on in the medical journals of Berlin and London—allowed that he had performed some wonderful cures, although the means by which the end was arrived at were, he professed to consider, unprofessional and undignified."

"Well, why don't we get this old fellow to come over and see Annette at once? Dr. Wainwright wouldn't stand upon ceremony now that he knows the real state of the case; and money's no object, you know, George; we could stand any amount among us, if we could only get poor Annette put right."

"You may be sure I have thought of that," said George.

"I spoke to my father about it, and know he would be delighted to aid in any way in getting old Hildebrand's advice, even though the method to be employed should be contrary to his ideas. But the old man has retired from practice for some time, and nothing can be heard of him. I have sent to some of my correspondents in Germany; but from the answers I have received, I am led to believe that he is dead."

"That is bad news, indeed," said Paul. "The intelligence about poor Annette has come upon me so suddenly, that I seem scarcely able to comprehend it."

"Your never having seen her under one of these attacks, and having only a recollection of her as being always bright and cheerful, would tend to prevent the realisation," said George. "I too always strive to think of her under her most cheerful aspect. God knows I would not willingly see her under any other."

"It is a deuced bad look-out, there's no denying," said Paul; then added gloomily, "everything seems to be going to the bad just now."

"I have been so wrapped-up in my own troubles that I have forgotten yours, Paul," said George. "Tell me, how are matters getting on between you and your young friend? Not very brilliantly, I fear, by your tone."

"Brilliantly! No, anything but that. Infernal, I should say," said Paul. "I can't make her out; she seems perfectly changed since my absence from London. I am sure something must have happened; but I don't know what it is."

"You recollect my hint to you at Beachborough about Theseus and Ariadne? You burst out into a rage then; what do you think now?"

"I don't know what to think," said Paul, "though it looks something like it, I am bound to confess."

"Then why don't you be a man, and break off the whole business at once?"

"Now, I like that," said Paul; "I really like that suggestion from a man who has been talking as you have been talking to me. Do you think you could?"

"No, I am sure I could not," said George. "It is the old

story: giving advice is the easiest thing in the world; following it the most difficult. I——"

"Hullo! here's Billy."

It was indeed Mr. Dunlop, who entered the room at the moment, and stood in the doorway regarding the two friends, who were leaning over the desk together, with a comical aspect.

"A very pretty picture indeed," said Mr. Dunlop. "'The Misers,' by Rembrandt, I think, or some other elderly parties of an obscure age. Whence this thusness? Do I intrude? If so, I am perfectly ready to withdraw. No one can ever say that W. D. forced himself into his office at times when his presence was not required there."

"Come in, and don't be an idiot, Billy," said Paul. "George and I were just talking over some private matters; but we have finished now."

"Private matters!" said Mr. Dunlop. "And by the look of you they must have been what the dramatist calls of 'serious import.' Confide in me. Come, rest on this bosom, my own stricken Deer-inzy. William is ready to give you advice, assistance, anything, indeed—except money. Of that latter article he is generally scarce; and Mr. Michael O'Dwyer has recently borrowed of him the attenuated remains of his quarterly stipend."

"No, Billy; thanks all the same; I don't think you can be of much use to either of us just now," said George, with a smile. "If you really are serious in what you said just now about money, you can have what you want from me."

"Thanks, generous stranger," said Billy. "You are like the rich uncle, who, from his purse containing notes to exactly double the amount—a favourite character in dramatic fiction, but one whom I have never yet had the pleasure of meeting in private life. No, I shall get on very well until the Chancellor of the Exchequer shells out."

And then Mr. Courtney came in, followed shortly by one or two other men, and the conversation dropped.

Paul Derinzy had rightly divined the reason of his mother's determination to come to London for a time. The Captain's

long-conceived disgust at the dulness of Beachborough had wrought him into such a state of insubordination, that even his wife's authority was no longer sufficient for his control. Mrs. Derinzy saw plainly that some immediate steps must be taken ; the Captain must go to London to see his old friends and his old haunts, and to enjoy himself once more after his former fashion. It would be unadvisable to let him go alone ; and as Mrs. Derinzy had the good sense to see that her favourite project regarding the marriage of Paul and Annette was finally knocked on the head, there was no longer so much reason for keeping the girl in the seclusion of the country ; and the head of the family therefore determined that they should all proceed to London together.

Principally for George's sake, for he had not much care of his own in the matter, Paul made no opposition to the proposed arrangement. He had perfectly made up his mind that the presence of his family in town should make no alteration in his own manner of life ; he would not be bound to them in any way, and would consider himself just as free as he was previously to their arrival. George would have an opportunity of seeing Annette, which would be good gained for him, poor old fellow ; and as for himself, he seemed to care little about what became of him ; his every thought was centred and bound up in Daisy. If she treated him well, he should be thoroughly happy ; if she threw him over, as indeed it looked somewhat likely she would, well, he should go to the bad at once, and there would be an end of it.

In due course of time the family arrived at the furnished house which had been taken for them in Queen Anne Street, and Paul and George went together to call there. The Captain was not at home ; he had already begun to taste the sweets of liberty ; had gone to the club, of which he still remained a supernumerary member ; had already accepted several dinner engagements ; was proposing to himself pleasure parties *galore*. But they found Mrs. Derinzy, and after a short interview with her, Annette entered the room. She seemed already to have benefited by the change. Both George and Paul thought her

looking unusually pretty and cheerful, and the blush which mounted to her cheeks when she saw and recognised the former, was as gratifying to him who had caused it, as it was astonishing to Mrs. Derinzy. Before they took their leave, the young men had arranged to dine there two days hence, when Mrs. Derinzy said the Captain should be present, and she would allow him to bring some of his old friends to meet them.

George, however, was not destined to be one of the guests at that dinner. When Paul arrived at the office the next morning, he found a note from his friend, couched in these terms:

"DEAR P.,—Rather an odd thing occurred last night. Some men were down here at my den, and among them Wraxall, who has just returned from a long tour on the Continent. He brought some sketch-books, and in glancing over them I was much struck with the extraordinary head of an old man. On my pointing it out to Wraxall, he told me it was drawn from life, and was indeed a portrait of an old German named Hildebrand. He had been celebrated as a 'mad doctor' in his day, and he was now resident at Mayence. Wraxall had seen him only ten days ago. Recollecting our last conversation when Hildebrand's name was mentioned, you will not be surprised to hear that I leave by this morning's tidal train for Brussels and the Rhine.

"Make my excuses to the Chief, and tell him I am taking the remainder of my leave. You shall hear, of course, as soon as I have anything to say. God bless you, my dear boy. I cannot help feeling that there is yet a gleam of hope.

"Yours ever,

"G. W."

"A gleam of hope," said Paul, as he finished the perusal of this note. "I hope so, indeed, my dear old man; but it is but a gleam, after all."

CHAPTER XXV.

WARNED.

PAUL DERINZY had indeed little reason to be satisfied with the treatment which he was experiencing at Daisy's hands; for though there had been nothing approaching to a final rupture between them, the new views of life which had opened upon her since her acquaintance with Colonel Orpington had afforded her a vast amount of matter for reflection. Of course the idea of the position which the Colonel had offered to her was by no means new to the girl's mind. Unhappily, too, the existence of such a position is unknown to a very small minority of innocents; and according to the present constitution of society, such a status is, it is to be feared, regarded by young women in Daisy's walk of life as one rather to be envied than shunned. But up to this time—perhaps partly owing to the severe training which she had received, which had had the effect of making her regard propriety as a sound commercial investment rather than as a duty to her conscience, partly to a real affection which she felt for Paul—she had resolutely refused to entertain any such ideas.

What had changed her? Not any diminution in the affection between her and her lover—not on his part, at least; for no man who did not worship her with all the depth of passion possible in his nature could have suffered so acutely as he did. Had she ceased to love him? No, she thought not; she could scarcely tell—the position was so unsatisfactory; that was all she could say to herself in thinking the matter over. She had not the least doubt that Paul would willingly make her such an offer as that which she had received from the Colonel; but then their circumstances were so different. Though Paul was undoubtedly a gentleman well connected, he was decidedly not rich, she knew that, or he would never have been content to remain in this office which he talked about; and to be rich,

free from care, to have command of money and servants and dresses and carriages, that was what her mind was bent on just now. Then Paul would marry her too if she were to press it, she knew that; but what would be the benefit by their marriage? He would gain no more money; she would gain merely the name of a position. She would not be received into his society; and he, finding she was ignored, would either break with his own people and cleave to her, when he would be sulky and bored, always regarding her as the bar to his assumption of his proper status in society; or would give her up, and lead his life among his friends, merely treating her as his housekeeper, and his home as a place to return to when there was no other house to visit.

It would be dull and dreary either way with Paul, the latter condition worse than the former, for then she would be tied, and the bonds would be more difficult to break. And yet she could not bring herself to an open rupture with her lover. He was so kind, so attentive, so delicate, and above all, so passionately devoted to her. It must come, she thought; it would come some time or other, but not just yet. The evil day should be delayed as long as possible. And she had given no answer to Colonel Orpington. She did not mind about that; he was a man of the world, and would not expect one immediately. He would ascribe her delay either to modesty or calculation; under the sway of which of the two he might imagine her to be deliberating was quite indifferent to her.

To only one out of the three men who proposed to pay her their addresses had she conveyed her decision: that one was John Merton. There would be no more trouble with him, she thought. He could not misunderstand her words, and, above all, her manner, during that conversation in the street on her way to the chambers in the Temple. She knew he had not misunderstood it by the abrupt way in which he had taken his departure. Daisy felt a mild kind of pain at having hurt John Merton's feelings, as the details of that interview recurred to her. But, after all, it was better at an end. It was perfectly impossible that she could have led the life which he offered her. In company with him it would have been very respectable and

very dull: in her then state of mind, Daisy considered that respectability and dulness generally went together. There would have been a bare sufficiency to live upon at first, and they would have had to have been supported by the hope of thriving on the inevitable progress of honesty, industry, and that kind of twaddle, which she had heard enunciated from pulpits, and seen set forth in the pages of cheap popular periodicals, in which, contrary to her experience of the world, the virtuous people got on wonderfully, besides being preternaturally clean in the woodcuts, while those who drank beer, and abstained from Sunday-afternoon service, were necessarily dirty and poverty-stricken.

It was not in her lodgings in South Molton Street that Daisy sat cogitating over these eventful circumstances, and deliberating as to her future. Madame Clarisse had gone away on business to Paris, and before she left she had requested her assistant to instal herself in the private rooms of the establishment in George Street.

"You will be better there, Fanfan, my child, than in the *mansarde* where you have been so long. There are certain people—you know who I mean; I need not mention their names—who, I think, would particularly wish it, and it is as well for us to oblige them, particularly when at the same time we do a good thing for ourselves; besides, it is good for the business that I should leave you in charge of it. I will not disguise from you, my dear child, that I do not think of continuing in commerce very much longer. I have had enough of it myself; and though I thought there might be a chance of my giving it up to someone who would comprehend the delicate *nuances* of the details with which I have surrounded it, and the care and trouble which I have expended upon it, it shall not go to Augustine, or to any of those others who have copied me and my ways over here in this *pays barbare*. I shall find someone in Paris who would like to come and *exploiter* her youth and her talent, and also, my faith! her money, amongst the *jeunes meess* and the robust dames of England; and as for myself, when that is done, Fanfan, I shall be free, and then *vogue la galère*. Perhaps in those days to come, Fanfan, you will not

mind seeing an old friend, who will not be so old but she will understand the life, and how to lead it." And here Madame Clarisse kissed her fingers and waved them in the air with an eminently-suggestive French gesture. "And you will give her a seat in your carriage, and tell her of all the conquests you are making."

And then Madame Clarisse gave Daisy's ear a little pinch, and laughed shrilly, and betook herself to the cold fowl and half bottle of very excellent Bordeaux which constituted her luncheon.

So Madame Clarisse went to Paris, and Daisy was installed in her place. And it was in the cosy little low-ceilinged room that she was seated, gazing at, but certainly not seeing, the furniture in red velvet, the engravings, the nicknacks, and the statuettes by Danton, that all these reflections on the past, and speculations upon the future, passed through her mind.

She had had a busy day, and was feeling rather fatigued, and thought she might refresh herself with a nap before she went through the business accounts and wrote to Madame a statement of what had occurred, as was her regular nightly practice, when a knock came to the door, and the shiny-faced page, entering quickly, announced that a gentleman was below and wished to see her.

"He has grown impatient," Daisy thought, "and is anxious for his answer. I scarcely expected that of him. However, I suppose it is rather a compliment than otherwise. He must have heard from Madame that I was here. You can show the gentleman up, James."

When the page had gone, Daisy ran into the back room and passed a brush over her hair, and just gave her face one touch with the powder puff which Madame Clarisse had left behind on her toilet-table, and returned into the sitting-room to confront, not Colonel Orpington, as she had expected, but John Merton.

Daisy started, and did not attempt to conceal her displeasure.

"I have ventured once again to call upon you, Miss

Stafford," said John; "but I had better commence by saying that this time I have not come on my own business."

"That at all events is good hearing, Mr. Merton," said Daisy, coldly.

"Exactly," said John. "I expected you to speak of it in that way. You may depend upon it you will never be further troubled, so far as I am concerned."

"To what, then, do I owe this——"

"Intrusion, you were going to say," interrupted he. "It is an intrusion, I suppose, so far as it is unasked and decidedly unwelcome."

"You speak bluntly, Mr. Merton."

"I speak strongly because I feel strongly, Miss Stafford."

"Perhaps you will be good enough to speak intelligibly at the same time," said Daisy. "You have enlarged upon what you have been pleased to call your unwelcome intrusion; but you have not explained the reason of it."

"You are right," said John. "I will proceed to do so at once. I am afraid I shall be a little lengthy, but that is unavoidable."

Daisy bowed, and tapped her foot impatiently. She felt that there was something horribly irritating in the calmness of this man's manner.

"I must begin at the beginning," said John, "and in doing so I must allude to matters which I have just promised should not again be mentioned by me. However, it is a necessity, and I will touch upon them as lightly as possible. You know that, ever since I first made your acquaintance through my sister, I took the greatest interest in you, and ended by being hopelessly in love with you."

Daisy bowed very coldly.

"I daresay it was very ridiculous, and I know you consider it highly presumptuous, though I am bound to confess I do not see any reason why I should have not felt an honest love for you, and should not have mentioned it to you. We are both members of the same class in society; and if it suited them in other ways, there was no reason why the milliner's first hand and the draper's assistant should not have been married."

He said these last words quietly; but there was a certain amount of bitterness in his tone, and Daisy flushed angrily as she heard them. She was about to speak, but refrained, and merely motioned him to proceed.

"However, that could not be," said John Merton in continuance. "The right of acceptance or rejection remained entirely with you, and you decided upon the latter."

He paused for a moment, and then said in a lower tone:

"If I had not been the besotted fool that I am, I should have accepted my dismissal as it was given—coolly, definitely, and without the slightest remorse; but, unfortunately, I am weak enough not to be able to take things in this way. I had too much at stake—my future happiness was too deeply involved—to permit of my bowing to my fate, and endeavouring to forget what had been the one sole excitement of many months in some new study or pursuit."

He paused again, as though expecting her to speak. But she was silent, and he continued:

"My sister, who was the cause of our first introduction, has been since the medium through which I have ascertained all my information about you. She was very chatty at first, and never was tired of talking to me of what you did and said, and where you went, and enlarging on the dulness of the life which you pursued. She little thought, I imagine, what intense interest I took in her voluble prattle. She thought me too much immersed in my own affairs to take any real heed of what she was saying, and imagined that I merely induced her to go on in order to distract my mind from graver subjects, and to fill up what would have been the tedium of my enforced leisure. It was not until the occasion of the little tea-party at that young lâdy's—— I see you smile; but from me the appellation is correct."

"I beg your pardon, I did not smile, Mr. Merton," said Daisy, almost savagely; "I am listening to you at your request. I am in no smiling humour; and I must beg you to make this interview as brief as possible."

"It was on the occasion of the tea-party at Miss Manby's then," continued John Merton, "that I think Bella saw for the

first time that all my queries about you had been put with deliberate intention, and had a definite aim. Previously to that she had once or twice joked me in her light way about my admiration of you, but nothing more ; but you may recollect—I do perfectly—that on that night she took delight in teasing me about that portrait which Mr. Kammerer had taken of you, and about the man—I beg your pardon, the gentleman—who came to the place and insisted upon buying it."

John stopped here, and looked at her so pointedly that Daisy could not restrain the rising blush in her cheek. She said quietly:

"I do recollect it perfectly."

"Of course you do ; no woman ever forgets any occasion on which she sees a man piqued or jealous at her preference of another."

"There was no question of preference in the matter," said Daisy. "I knew nothing about the gentleman who wished to purchase the portrait ; I had only seen him once ; and there can be no great crime, even in the category of sins proscribed by the severe doctrine which I presume you hold, and which, at all events, you teach, in a girl's finding pleasure at admiration bestowed upon her."

"I must get back to my facts," said John Merton, quietly. "I suppose I showed that I was annoyed that night, and from my annoyance Bella judged that I was in earnest about you. We don't meet very often, and we have very little in common, for she is younger than I am, and does not take quite the same view of the world that I do—she has not seen so much of it, poor girl ; and for a long time you were not mentioned between us. During all the time that I was in suspense, before I had made up my mind to express my feelings to you, and ask you to be my wife, and after that in the short period before I met you walking in the street, we seemed mutually to avoid any mention of your name. It seemed to me too sacred to be bandied about with such jests and light talk as Bella would probably have used concerning it ; and she seemed to understand my feeling and to humour it. At all events, during that time nothing was said about you ; but since then—since I heard from your own

lips what was equivalent to my dismissal—we have frequently reverted to the theme. You will understand, please, that in mentioning what I am going to tell you, I am by no means endeavouring to harrow your feelings, or to work upon your compassion; it simply comes in as part of what I have to say; and I must say it."

John might have spared himself this digression, for Daisy was in no melting mood, and sat listening, half-sternly contemptuous, half-savagely irate. All the notice she took of these remarks was to give a very slight bow.

"I was completely upset by your decision," John continued; "and though I ought never to have expected anything else, that came so suddenly upon me, the pleasing path in dreamland was so abruptly ended, the visions which I had indulged were so ruthlessly chased away——"

Here Daisy tapped her foot very impatiently. John started, and said, "I beg your pardon," so comically, that Daisy could scarcely refrain from smiling.

"I mean, it was all over so quickly that I took it to heart like a fool, and became moping and low. I sent for Bella then, and got her to come and see me constantly in the evening, when our work for the day was over; and I began again to talk to her about you, not telling her anything about what had happened, but talking just as I used in the old days, only a little more passionately perhaps; for my usual quiet nature was aroused at the thought of the way in which you had treated me, and at the idea of what might have been—what might be yet, I suppose I thought to myself; for one night I told Bella all about my coming to you in South Molton Street, the declaration that I made, and the way in which you received it. Then I told her of that horrible interview, when we met in the street, and when you treated me as though I had been a servant. She was naturally angry about this, and talked the usual stuff which people do in such cases, advising me not to think of you any more; that you could not appreciate my worth; that there were plenty of other women who—you know the style of condolence on such occasions. I seemed to agree with her; and I suppose I actually did so for some little time; but then the what-might-be

feeling took possession of me, and I began idiotically to buoy myself up with a hope that you might have spoken hurriedly and without thought, that I might have been proud and hasty; and, in fact, that there might yet be a chance of future happiness for me. Bella must have discovered this almost as soon as I felt it; for she seemed to discourage my questions about you, and my evident inclination to forget what had passed, and to endeavour to renew my acquaintance with you. She was very quiet and kind at first—she was kind throughout, I suppose I ought to say; but when she found that my feverish longing to see you again was coming to a height, that I was bent upon imploring you to reconsider your determination, she spoke openly to me, and told me what I would sooner have died than have heard."

Daisy looked up quickly and angrily at him.

"And what," she said scornfully, "may this wonderful communication have been?"

"I suppose you do not know Bella's share in all that has taken place, or you would not ask the question," said John.

"I am not aware that Bella Merton has any share in anything that concerns me," said Daisy. "It is useless speaking any further in riddles. You promised you would speak out; hitherto you have done so, and you must continue to the end."

"I will," said John Merton; "I came to do it, and I will carry it through at whatever pain it may be for me to speak, for you to hear. My sister Bella, then, has informed me that a man—one of those whom you call gentlemen, but from whom I withhold the name—has ventured to make dishonourable proposals to you; in plain terms, to ask you to live with him as his mistress."

"Mr. Merton!" cried Daisy, in a wild access of rage, "how dare——"

"Pardon me," said John, raising his hand; "we decided, if you recollect, that we should go through this matter to the end. You will not deny the accusation, I know, for you are too proud to stoop to any such mean subterfuge; and even if you did, I could not believe you, for I have the confession of one whom

this scoundrel has made an accomplice. You see it is not entirely on your account that I have to bring this man to book, Miss Stafford," said John, who had turned very white, and whose hands were clenching nervously. "He has debased my sister into becoming a participator of his wretched work, a tool to help him to his miserable end. All the time that Bell was intimate with you, she was, unknown to you, fetching and carrying between you and this man, feeding your vanity with accounts of his admiration, giving him information as to your movements, playing the wretched part of half go-between, half spy."

"You know that I knew nothing of this!" Daisy broke out.

"Perfectly," said John Merton; "but that only makes it the worse for her. However, it is not of her I came to speak, but of you."

"I think you may spare yourself the trouble," said Daisy, looking steadily at him; "you have no position giving you the slightest claim to interfere with me or my actions, and in forming conjectures, in coming to conclusions about my future movements, you have already taken a most unwarrantable liberty. I desire that you say no more, and leave me at once."

"Ah, for God's sake, no!" cried John Merton, in a tone so shrill and startling that it went to Daisy's heart—"Ah, for God's sake, no! Give up this outside crust of stoicism and conventionality, and let me plead to the woman that you really are. Have you for an instant thought of what you are doing? I know that you have temporised without giving any answer. Bella told me that; but have you thought how even this delay may compromise you? Are you, so lovely as you are, so bright and clever and graceful, going to sacrifice your whole life, to place all those charms at the mercy of a man who will use them while he chooses, and fling them away when he is tired? I don't want to preach; I only want to put matters plainly before you. Suppose you consent to this infernal proposal which has been made to you. The man is old; he has not even the excuse of a mad passion, which is deaf to the calls of conscience, or even to the common feelings of humanity. He has not that excuse; he is old, and jaded, and fickle; the life which he is leading requires constantly new excitement; and after a little time your

novelty will have passed away, and you will be thrown aside to shift for yourself. Could your high spirit brook that? Could you bear to see yourself pointed at as deserted, or, worse than all, find yourself compelled to become subject to some venal bargain—Oh God, it is too horrible to think of!"

"I will not bear this from anyone; certainly not from you. What right have you to interfere?"

"What right have I to interfere! The right of having loved you with all my whole soul and strength; the right of one whose future has been bittered by your refusal to share it with him. I don't pine," he cried, "about a broken heart; I can bear to contemplate the lonely life which I shall have to lead; I could bear"—and the words here came very slowly through his set teeth—"to see you happily married to a man who appreciated and loved you, as I should have delighted in doing; but I will not stand patiently by to see the woman I have loved held up to the world's scorn, or deliberately dragged down to the depths of infamy."

He spoke so strongly and so earnestly, his rude eloquence came evidently from the depths of his troubled heart, that even Daisy's stubborn pride seemed a little touched.

"I know you mean this kindly towards me, Mr. Merton," she said, in a low voice; "and I fear I have shown myself scarcely sufficiently grateful, or even civil, to you; but, believe me, I appreciate your motives, and I thank you for coming here. Now you must go."

"You will not send me away without assurance that this cruel thing shall not be; that you will say No to this horrible proposal, and never give it another moment's thought. Ah, do not think I am pleading for myself; do not think I am cherishing any vain hope that, this once put aside, I may come forward again and urge my suit. It is not so, I swear. I have accepted my fate, and shall—well, shall struggle on somehow, I daresay. It is for you, and you alone, that I am interested. Let me go away with the assurance that you are saved. Ah, Fanny, it is not much I ask you. Let me go away with that."

"It would be easy for me to give you that assurance, and

then to do as I pleased," said Daisy; "but you have shown yourself so true a friend that I will not deceive you."

"And you will give me the assurance?"

"No; I did not, I cannot, say that."

"Then I will get it," cried John, "from Colonel Orpington."

Daisy started. It was the first time the name had been mentioned during the interview.

"You see I know him, and know where to find him. I will make him promise me to give up this pursuit."

The tone in which he spoke had worked a wonderful and immediate change in Daisy's feelings.

"Make him!" she cried. "You will not find the gentleman of whom you speak so easily forced to compliance with your desires."

"I did not mean to force him," said John; "I——"

"If it were not for the fear of compromising my name," said Daisy, now thoroughly roused, her eyes flashing, and her lip trembling, "he would hand you over to the police. We have had enough of this folly," she said, stamping her foot; "and as it is impossible to get you to go away, I must retire and leave you."

As she spoke she rose from her seat, and giving him a very slight bow, she passed into the bedroom, the door of which she closed behind her.

John Merton waited for a moment, then turned on his heel, and silently left the house.

CHAPTER XXVI.

AM RHEIN.

GEORGE WAINWRIGHT found that early winter had already descended upon Germany. When he arrived at Cologne the

last tourist had long since passed through that pleasant old city. The large hotels were shut up ; the *valets de place* and cathedral touters had melted away, only to reappear with the advent of summer ; all the vendors of the Eau had shut up their shops, and disappeared to more lively places, to spend the money which they had acquired during the season ; and even in the second and third rate hotels the large *salons* were closed, and but the smaller apartments were kept open for the reception of such commercial gentlemen as the exigences of business kept upon the road.

This did not matter much to George Wainwright, who was as careless of luxuries as most men, and who, as an old traveller, had comfortable head-quarters on which he could depend in most leading cities in Europe. It was at the Brusseler Hof that George put up when he was in Cologne, and, no matter what the season, he was sure to find the cosy little second-rate inn full of business, and to experience a hearty welcome from stout old Schuhmacher the landlord.

It was not so long since his last visit but that he was remembered ; and on his arrival, was placed close up at his old host's right hand at the little *table d'hôte*, consisting then solely of the host's family and a few neighbouring burghers, who habitually dined there all the year round. There was a good deal of quiet solemn chaff at the idea of an Englishman daring to put in an appearance on the Rhine border between the months of October and May, and a certain amount of ponderous solicitude expressed in many polysyllabic words was exhibited as to the reason of his journey. But George took care to keep this to himself, passing it off in the best way he could, and merely informing his querists that he was going as far as Mainz.

Then he heard that ice had fallen in the river, that the steam-boat traffic was quite suspended, and that he would have to travel in the *eilwagen*, which he learned to his cost on the morrow was a humorous name for a wretched conveyance something like a *diligence*, without an *intérieur* or a *banquette*, which crawled along at the rate of between five and six miles an hour, and the company in which was anything but desirable.

George slept at Coblenz that night, and the next day made his way to Mainz, where he at once proceeded to an old inn situate in one of the back streets of the town, and bearing the sign Zum Karpfen, which was the head-quarters of the artistic body who nightly held high jinks in the *kneipe* there.

By numerous members of this brotherhood—young men fantastically dressed, with long hair and quaintly-cut beards, and pipes of every kind and shape pendent from their mouths—George was received with very great enthusiasm. Some of them had been his fellow-students at the University; all of them had heard of him and his learning, and his love for German songs and traditions and student-life. And high revelry was held that night in honour of his arrival; and *ohms* of beer were voted by acclamation and speedily drunk; and speeches were made, and songs were sung, and George was kissed and embraced by full two-thirds of the company present.

The next morning he was up betimes, and paid an early visit at the Hofapotheke or Court-laboratory of the town, the manager of which would, as he was informed, be able to give him Dr. Hildebrand's address. The manager, who was a very little man, with large protruding eyes covered with great horn spectacles, and very large flap ears, and who looked so like an owl that George almost expected him to hop on to the counter, was very polite but extremely reticent.

"Oh yes; he had the pleasure of the Herr Doctor's acquaintance. Who was there in the great world to whom the berühmter Herr Doctor was not known? It was in Dorrendorf that this so justly celebrated man formerly resided had. Was it not true? But where did he reside now? Ah, that was something quite otherwise. Was the Mr. Englishman who spoke the German language with so excellent an accent—was he perhaps of the medical profession?"

"No; but his father. And perhaps the courteous manager of the Court laboratory might know the name of Wainwright."

"Vainrayte!" The courteous manager knew it perfectly. He had read the even so clever treatises on the subject of

"Mania and Mental Diseases," which that so justly renowned physician had written. And the Mr. Englishman was the son of the Doctor von Vainrayte! There would be no difficulty then in letting him know the address of Dr. Hildebrand.

And after further interchange of bows and courtesies, George took his departure, bearing with him the old physician's address.

Dr. Hildebrand lived some distance from the town, in a little road fringed on either side by detached villas standing in their trim gardens, the road itself turning out of a noble *allée* of chestnut-trees, which forms one of the principal outlets of the town. All the gardens were neatly kept, and all the houses seemed clean and trim and orderly; but George remarked that the Doctor's house and garden seemed the neatest of all. He was almost afraid to stand on the doorstep as he rang the bell, lest he should sully its whiteness; and, indeed, the old woman who opened the door immediately looked at the prints of his boots with great disfavour.

She answered his question of whether the Doctor were at home by another, asking him what was his business; and was evidently inclined to be disagreeable at first, but softened in her manner when George told her that he had come all the way from England in order to see her master.

She smiled at this, and condescended to admit him, not without a parting glance at the muddy footprints, and without enjoining him to rub his feet on the square scraper standing inside the hall which did duty for a mat. Then she ushered him into a small and meanly-furnished dining-room, which, like every other apartment in the house, smelt very strongly of tobacco, and there left him.

George could not help smiling to himself as he looked round the room, the furniture and appointments of which recalled to him such pleasant memories of his German student days. There on the little sideboard was the coarse whity-brown cloth, so different from English table-linen, rolled up and waiting for use. There was the battered red japanned bread-tray, containing the half-dozen white *brodchens*, the lump of *sauerbrod*, and the thin slices of *schwarzbrod*. There were the

three large cruets, so constantly required for salad-mixing purposes, and the blunt black-handled knives and forks. On the wall was a print from Horace Vernet's ghastly illustration of Bürger's Lenore, showing the swift death-ride, the maiden lying in fainting terror across the horse's neck, borne in the arms of the corpse, whose upraised visor shows its hideous features.

There were also two or three portraits of eminent German physicians and surgeons. On the table lay folded copies of the *Cologne Gazette* and the *Augsburg Zeitung*; and each corner of the room was garnished with a spittoon.

George had just time to take observation of these things, when the door opened, and the old woman entering, begged him to follow her, as her master would see him.

Down a long passage and across a small garden, not trim or neat by any means—more of a yard, indeed—in which linen that had been washed was hanging out to dry, and so to the Doctor's study—a large room surrounded with bookcases crammed and overflowing. Books piled in the middle of the floor in miscellaneous heaps; Pelions on Ossas of books in the corners having overcharged themselves, and shot their contents all over the neighbouring space. A large eight-day clock in a heavy open case ticking solemnly on one side of the fireplace, the niche on the other side being occupied by a suspended skeleton. On the mantel-piece bottles of anatomical preparations, polished bones, and cases of instruments; in the middle of the room an enormous old-fashioned writing-table, littered with papers and books on which the dust had thickly accumulated. Seated at it, busily engaged in writing, and scarcely looking up as they entered the room, was Dr. Hildebrand, one of the greatest men of science of his day.

A tall man, standing over six feet in height, of strange aspect, rendered still more strange by the contrast between his soft silver-white air, brushed back from his forehead and hanging down over his coat-collar, and the sable hue of an enormous pair of bushy bristly eyebrows, which stuck out like pent-houses, and from under which his keen black eyes looked forth. His features were coarse and rugged, his nose large and

thick, his mouth long and ill-shaped, his jaw square, and his chin enormous. He was dressed in a long gray, greasy dressing-gown, an old black waistcoat and black trousers, and had frayed worked slippers on his feet. He was smoking a long pipe, the painted porcelain bowl of which hung far below his knees; and from its depths, in the influence of the excitement as he wrote, he kept drawing up and emitting short thick puffs of smoke, in which he was enshrouded.

After a short space of time, during which George sat motionless, the old gentleman came to the end of the passage which he was writing; and, looking up for inspiration or what not, perceived his visitor.

He looked at him sharply from under his heavy brows, and then, in a harsh voice, and with but scant show of courtesy, said:

"Gefällig?" (What is your pleasure?)

George, speaking in German, began to inform the old gentleman that he had travelled a very long way for the purpose of seeing and consulting him. His fame had reached England, where——

"You are von England out?" interrupted the Doctor.

"I am."

"And yet you speak die Cherman speech so slippery!" said the old gentleman. "So to me is it mit the English, it is to me equal; but as I hef not the praxis had, if it is so bleasant to you, we will the English langvitch dalk."

"With the greatest pleasure," said George. "I was mentioning to you, Herr Doctor, that your great fame and renown had brought me from England for the purpose of consulting you on one of those cases which you have made your special study, and one in which I am particularly interested."

"Zo!" said the Doctor, emitting a long puff of smoke, "aber ist es ihnen nicht bekannt—I mean, is it not know to you dass I ze praxis have gave up? Dass I vill no more the curatives inspect, but vill me zum studiren leave?"

"I have heard so, Herr Doctor; but I thought that perhaps under peculiar circumstances you might make an exception."

"Und die peguliar circonstances is——?"

"I thought perhaps that when I told you of the case, a young girl——"

"Ah, bah!" interrupted the old gentleman, with a short and angry puff. "It is nothing vorths; dass young kirls und dummerei! Dass geht mit mir nicht mehr. I am one old man now and"——then turning suddenly, "she is your schwester, vat?"

"No; at present she is nothing to me, though if she were well, I should hope to make her my wife."

"Your vaife! Ah, ha! you are verlobt, vat you call engachement, vat? And she is——?" touching his forehead. "Ach, du lieber Gott! dass ist aber schwer. Und so fine a young man! How do you call? Vat is your name, eh?"

"You have heard it before, I think," said George. "My name is Wainwright."

"Vainwraet!" screamed the old gentleman; "was von Vainwraet dass der *Tarkened Maind*, der *Seclusion, is it koot or bat?* der *Non Restraint in Lunacie*, und so weiter? der Doctor Vainwraet, are you mit ihm verwandt, are you of him relatived?"

"I am Dr. Wainwright's son," said George.

"His sohn! was der sohn of Vainwraet, der berühmter Doctor Vainwraet, was von die Pedlams, und die Lukes und Hanvell Hash—Hatch, vot you call; is dass shaining licht, so hell and so klar, dass his sohn should komm to Chermany to consult *me*, one such humble man, is to me honourable indeed."

George readily detected a very strong accent of scorn running through this speech, and the bow with which the old gentleman concluded it was one of mock humility. He scarcely knew how to reply; but after a moment's pause he said, "I thought, sir, you would know my father's name."

"His name is mir sehr wohl bekannt, ver vell bequaint with him," said the Doctor with a grin, "and mit his praxis nevertheless, notwithstanding, likewise," he added, nodding his head with great delight as he uttered each of the last three words. "Tell to me, your father has he seen your braut, dass mädchen, die young dame?"

"Yes, he has seen her several times."

"And what says he of her?"

George shrugged his shoulders, and shook his head despairingly. "He says he can do her no good—that her case is incurable."

"Which is two tifferent brobositions, of which I cannot tubidade about the fairst, though the second may not be founded on fact," said the Doctor. "No, my young chentleman, I am combassionate and sorrow for you, but I cannot preak my rule. I hef retaired myself to studiren, and will inspect no more curatives; and as to your father, der berühmter Vainwraet, it is not for him I preak my rule! He is an shamposter, see you, an shamposter!" The puffs from the pipe came very thick and very rapidly. "An shamposter, sir, mit his dreadises and his bamphlets, and his lecturings delivered before the Collegiums drum und herum! He laugh at my ice-theory in his vat you call Physikalische Zeitung, *Lancer—Lancet!* He make chokes at my institute in Dorrendorf, vat? He is a shamposter, dieser Vainwraet, and to the devil mit him and his sohn, and die ganze geschichte!"

The old gentleman waved his hand as he spoke, as if he were really consigning his visitor to the dread limbo which he had named, reseated himself at his desk, from which he had risen in his rage, and began writing and smoking furiously.

What was to be done? George made an attempt at renewing the conversation, but the Doctor only waved his arm impatiently, and cried "Fort!" in shrill accents.

So George Wainwright came away despondingly. His last chance of getting Annette restored to health had failed, and his outlook on life was very blank indeed.

CHAPTER XXVII.

PATRICIAN AND PROLETARY.

IT was deep mid-winter, and Colonel Orpington was at home at his house in Hill Street, Berkeley Square. Miss Orpington was at home too, temporarily. She had just come up from one of the charming country-houses where she and her chaperone had been spending Christmas, and in a week's time she was about to rush off to another charming country-house, where she would meet the same people, and they would all do the same things, and thoroughly enjoy themselves. This forthcoming one is the last visit she will pay before her marriage. Early in the ensuing spring the Yorkshire baronet with money is to claim Miss Orpington for his own; meantime the interval between the two visits is spent by the young lady in shopping and visiting during the day, and making her father take her to the theatre at night.

Colonel Orpington accepts the position with his usual complacency. He has lived long enough in the world to allow very few things indeed to ruffle him. Even the fact of his not having had any answer from Fanny Stafford does not annoy him.

"A younger man," he says to himself, "would fret and fume, and get in a deuce of a stew. What would be the good of that? It would not make the answer come any quicker, and it would not have any effect upon the girl's decision when she had made up her mind to send it. I am not at all sure that this delay is not rather good than otherwise. My heart does not beat quite so quickly as it did five-and-twenty years since, nor does the blood tingle in my veins to such an extent as at that period, and I can afford to wait. And even if the young lady should make up her mind to decline my proposition, I should certainly not commit suicide, though I confess I hope she may accept it for more reasons than one.

"I expect that this house will be deuced dull after Emily marries. I should have to get a clergyman's widow, or somebody of that kind, to come and be housekeeper. That would be horribly dull, and I don't see why I should have all the expense of keeping this place up. All the people I want to entertain I could have at the club; and if it is necessary for me to give a couple of ladies' dinners during the season—well, they can be done at Greenwich or Richmond, by Hart or Ellis, at less expense and without any trouble. I think I should have chambers in Piccadilly, or somewhere thereabouts; and then that other little arrangement would suit me admirably, provided the Paradise which I propose to establish was situated within an easy drive of town.

"I shall have to lay out a new line of life for myself, I think. I confess I don't see my way to what Emily said the other night about my being constantly with them. She is a very nice girl, and Hawker's a good fellow in his way; but his place is a deuced long way off, and I am getting a little too old to like to be 'braced', as they call it, by that infernally keen air that sweeps over the Yorkshire moors. Besides, they'll be having children, and that kind of thing; and it would be a confounded nuisance to have to be called 'Grandpapa!' Ridiculous position for a man of my appearance! So that, except when they are in town, and one can go to dinner, or to her box at the opera, or that kind of thing, I don't expect I shall see much of them. Grandpapa! by Jove, that would be positively awful!"

And the Colonel rises from his seat, and looks at himself in the glass, and poodles his hair, and strokes his moustache, and is eminently satisfied with his appearance.

It is in the breakfast-room that the Colonel makes these remarks to himself. Miss Orpington has not yet come down. She has announced by her maid that she has a headache, she supposes from the close atmosphere of the theatre the previous evening, and is taking her breakfast in bed. The Colonel has finished his meal, and is wondering what he will do with himself. He strolls to the window, and looks into the street, which is thick with slush. There has been a little snow early

in the morning, and it has melted, as snow does nine times out of ten in London, and has been left to lie where it melted, as it always is in London, and the result is a universal pool of slush and mud, a couple of inches deep. The Colonel shakes his head and shrugs his shoulders, and turns away. He had some notion of going for a ride, but he doesn't see the fun of being splashed up to his eyes, and of having to hold damp and slippery reins with aching fingers. So he thinks he will stroll down to the club and look through the papers, and have a chat with anybody who may be available.

At that moment Miss Orpington enters the room. She walks up to her parent, who is standing on the hearthrug, and turning her head, presents to him the lobe of her ear. The Colonel bestows an affectionate embrace on this portion of his daughter's anatomy, and inquires after her headache.

He is reassured at hearing it is better. Then Miss Orpington inquires, "Who is the person in the hall?"

"Person in the hall!" The Colonel has not the smallest idea.

"There is a person in the hall," Miss Orpington avers. "A tradesman-looking person—bootmaker, or something of that kind, she should think from his appearance."

Then the Colonel gives a little start, and remembers that something had been said to him about half an hour ago about somebody wishing to see him.

The bell is rung, and inquiries are made from the servant about the person in the hall.

A mysterious stranger, who declines to give his name, but is extremely anxious to see Colonel Orpington, and will take no refusal. Had been waiting there half an hour, and seemed inclined to wait on.

Miss Orpington says, "How very odd!" The Colonel raises his eyebrows, and ejaculates, "Deuced!" then tells the servant to show the mysterious person into the library; and after the lapse of a few minutes he himself proceeds thither.

On entering the room Colonel Orpington perceives the stranger to be a tall, good-looking young man belonging to the middle-classes, and with a curious expression on his face

which reminds the Colonel of someone of his acquaintance whom he cannot immediately recollect. The man, who is standing, bows at the Colonel's entrance, but declines to take the seat to which he is motioned.

"You wish to speak to me, I believe?" said the Colonel, stiffly.

He had committed a stretch of courtesy by inviting a young man obviously in the commercial interest to take a seat, and was somewhat outraged at finding his civility not appreciated.

"You are Colonel Orpington?" said the visitor.

"I am. I understand you decline to give your name."

"For the present, yes. When you have heard my business, if you do not by that time guess who I am, I shall be happy to tell you."

"Deuced polite of you, I'm sure," said the Colonel with a grin. "Perhaps you'll tell me what your business is. Some account to be settled, I suppose? If so, I am not in the habit of discussing such matters. If the money is due, you can have it and go."

"There is an account to be settled," said the visitor; "but it is not of the nature that you suppose."

He spoke very quietly but very earnestly; so earnestly that the Colonel leaned forward in his seat and looked at him with an attention which he had hitherto not bestowed upon him.

"Is this a plant?" said the wily old warrior to himself. "My friend here looks very much of the outraged-brother order; but I have had nothing of that kind on hand for years." Then aloud, "What is your business, then?"

"I have come here, Colonel Orpington, to appeal to your feelings as a gentleman and a man of honour."

"Monstrous good of you to take the trouble, I'm sure," said the Colonel, with the old grin.

"Hear me out first, and then say what you please," said the visitor. "Depend upon it, I should not have come here on the chance of submitting myself to miscomprehension and indignity, if I had not some adequate motive."

Again the Colonel noticed the likeness to someone in this man's face, and again he failed to trace it to its original.

"There is no need to make a long story of what I have to say; it can be very shortly told. You will understand me at once, Colonel Orpington, when I tell you that my name is Merton, and that I am the brother of a young woman with whom you have been for some time past in communication."

"It *is* the outraged-brother business, after all," said the Colonel to himself. "This man has found his sister was in the habit of occasionally coming to chambers; perhaps has learned that I occasionally give her money; and he jumps at once to a wrong conclusion."

Then looked up and said, "Well, sir!"

"You have made my sister a tool for a most dishonourable purpose. You have caused her to aid you in a plot against one of her own sex, her friend, and situated much as she might have been herself."

"By Jove," muttered the Colonel beneath his breath, "I was wrong; he is on the other tack!"

"I do not presume to understand how you had the audacity——"

"Sir!" cried the Colonel.

"I repeat the word—the audacity to attempt to induce my sister to become a spy, and something worse than a spy! You must have had greater powers of perception than I gave you credit for to comprehend that you could offer her such a post, and that she would accept it. Of her part in the transaction I have nothing to say, nor indeed of yours so far as she is concerned."

"That being the case, Mr.—— Mr.—I beg your pardon—Merton, perhaps we had better bring this interview to an end," said the Colonel, rising to his feet. "I am not going to pick words with you as to the expression which you have chosen to apply to the commission which your sister executed for me. She executed and was paid for it, and there's an end of it."

"Not yet," said John Merton. "You don't imagine that I should come here, in the present day, when all these things are taken for granted, to endeavour to wring your conscience by proving to you that you tempted a young girl to do a dishonest,

disloyal, and dishonourable act? You don't imagine I am quixotic enough to think that even if you listen to me patiently, what I said to you would have one grain of effect a moment after the door had closed upon me? You don't think I am a missionary from the lower classes come to prate to the upper of decency and honour?"

He spoke in a loud high key, his eyes were flashing, and his whole face was lit up with excitement.

"What my sister did for you is done and ended so far as she is concerned, and I will not give you the excuse for a smile by telling you that she is sorry for it now, and sees her conduct in a light in which she did not before perceive it. You *do* smile, and I know why: you think it is easy to profess repentance when the deed has been done and the reward paid. You paid to my sister at various times sums amounting to thirty pounds. In this envelope," laying one on the table, "are three ten-pound notes. So far, Colonel Orpington, we are quits."

The Colonel sat still, with his eyes intently fixed on his visitor. As he remained silent, John Merton proceeded:

"I wish the other matter could be as easily settled. But in this I meet you on even terms; in the other I come as a suppliant."

The Colonel's face became a little more hard, and he sat a little more erectly in his chair, as he heard these last words.

"Through my sister's aid, directly or indirectly, you made the acquaintance of Miss Stafford. Well," he continued, as he noticed a motion of protest on the Colonel's part, "you may not actually have made her acquaintance—that, I believe, commenced at the place where she was employed—but it was through my sister's aid that you knew of her, that you learned all about her, and that you found out she was likely to swallow the gilded bait by which even now you are endeavouring to secure her. When a man in your position pays attention to a girl in hers, it can be but with one meaning and intention. Whether Miss Stafford knew that or not, during these last few months in which you have been constantly hanging about her, I cannot say: but she knows it now; for you yourself have placed it before her in language impossible to be misunderstood."

"Look here, sir!" cried the Colonel, starting forward.

"Wait and hear me, sir," said John Merton; "you must, you shall! I told you I was prepared to submit to indignity, to endure your sneers and sarcasms. I would not have put myself in the way of them for my sister's sake; but I would for Fanny Stafford."

"Ah, ha!" said the Colonel to himself, "a lover instead of brother; greater virtuous indignation, infinitely more savage, but with less claim to show it."

"I have known her," continued John Merton, "for some years, and it is not too much to say that I have loved her all the time."

"Exactly," said the Colonel complacently.

"I told you I was prepared for sneers," said John; "I shall not shrink from avowing to you even that mine has been a hopeless passion; that, after bearing it a long, long time in silence, I took courage to speak to Miss Stafford, and received a definite and unmistakable dismissal. You will glory in that avowal, because you will think it increases the chances that the answer for which you are waiting will be a favourable one. I know you are waiting for such an answer. You see I know all."

"You seem to be devilish well posted up," growled the Colonel, "certainly."

"I don't think that her rejection of me would influence Miss Stafford one way or the other in this matter; I put myself entirely out of the question. Though her answer will have a certain effect on my future life, I by no means come here as a desponding lover to implore any leniency towards himself from his rival——"

"I should think not," observed the Colonel parenthetically.

"The leniency I would implore must be exercised towards her. I come to you, not as a Christian man to show you the sin you contemplate, and to implore you to avoid its commission; for I have not the right to do so, nor would it be of the least avail; I know that perfectly. I simply come to ask you to spare her, just to spare her."

"Not a bad idea, Mr. Merton," said the Colonel, with his baleful grin. "You are the young warrior who rescues the damsel from the giant's castle, and in gratitude the damsel—though she did not care for him before—of course bestows her hand on him, and they live happy ever after."

"No, by my solemn soul, no! In all human probability I shall never set eyes upon Miss Stafford again; but I should like to know that some honest man's home was cheered by her presence, some honest man's children called her mother, although such happiness is not in store for me."

"Look here, Mr. Merton," said the Colonel. "I have let you run on to a certain length without interrupting you, because you explained at once that you wished to talk off straight away. But I think now I must pull you up, if you please. You have made out a very pretty story, hanging well together, and that kind of thing; and I have not contradicted you because I am not in the habit of lying, and I don't choose to stoop even to what is called prevarication. So, supposing we take all this for granted, I say to you, 'Why don't you speak to the young lady herself? The matter rests with her; it is she who has to decide it.' I shall not appear in George Street with a band of free-booters to carry her off, nor will she be seized upon by any men in black masks as she walks home to her lodgings. This is the latter half of the nineteenth century, when such actions are not common. A simple Yes or No is all she has to say, and the affair is entirely in her hands."

"I told you at once that I did not deny your perspicacity in reading character. You showed it in your selection of my sister as your agent; you show it further in your selection of Miss Stafford"—here John Merton's voice sank to a whisper, and he spoke through his teeth—"to be what you propose to make her. You know that you have exactly gauged the mind and temperament of this girl; that, strong-minded in some things, she is weak in others; vain, too sensitive and too refined for the people with whom she is brought into contact, and longing for luxuries which, while they are denied to her, she sees other people enjoy."

"I must reciprocate your compliment about the knowledge

of character, Mr. Merton," said the Colonel; "your description of Miss Stafford appears to me quite exact."

"Knowing this, you know equally well," continued John Merton, "that she is the style of person to be caught by the temptations which you have thought fit to offer her; you know perfectly well that her hesitation in deciding on your proposition is simply caused by the small remnants of the influence of proper bringing-up and self-respect struggling with her wishes and inclinations."

"If Miss Stafford's wishes and inclinations prompt her to do what I am asking her to do, I really cannot see why I should be expected to consent to thwart them and upset my own plans."

"Colonel Orpington," said John Merton, sternly, "I have told you that I would not pretend to thrust the religious side of this question upon you; and in return I have a right to call upon you to drop this society jargon, and let us talk this matter out as men. I will make this concession to your vanity: I will tell you I fully believe that Miss Stafford's future fate is in your hands; that if you choose to persist in the offer which you have made to her, or rather if you do not actually withdraw it, she will become something so degraded that I, who love her so, would sooner see her dead."

"Look here, my good sir," interrupted the Colonel, impatiently; "you were good enough to talk about my using 'society's jargon;' I must trouble you to drop the language of the penny romances. What the deuce do you mean by 'something so degraded?' If Miss Stafford accepts my propositions, she will have everything she wants."

"Will she?" said John Merton, quickly. "Will she have your name? or, even supposing she makes use of it, will she have any lawful right to do so? Will she have the companionship of honest women, the friendship of honest men?"

"She will have, what is a deuced sight better, the envy of pretty women, and the companionship of pleasant fellows," said the Colonel.

"You meet my earnestness with flippancy," said John Merton. "I know Fanny Stafford, and, with all her vanity and

all her love of luxury, I know that after a time the life would be insupportable to her. Her proud spirit would never brook the stares which would greet her, and the whisperings which would follow her progress. No amount of money at her command would make up to her for that."

"I still think that this is a matter for Miss Stafford's decision," said the Colonel. "You really cannot expect me to place before her all the disadvantages of my own offer in the strong light in which you review them."

John Merton paused a moment; then he said:

"I will not take up more than five minutes more of your time, Colonel Orpington, but I should like just to discuss this question perhaps rather more from your point of view What I have hitherto mentioned, you say concerns Miss Stafford; but now about yourself. Supposing events to follow as you have proposed——"

"As I have every expectation they will," said the Colonel, pleasantly smiling.

"You have a right to that expectation," said John. "Well, supposing they so fall out, you are too much a man of the world to expect that your—well, what you are pleased to call your love for Miss Stafford will last for ever."

"It will be uncommonly unlike any other love if it did," said the Colonel.

"Exactly; it will run its course and die out, as similar passions have, I should imagine, expired in previous years. What do you propose to do then?"

"I decline to anticipate such a state of affairs," said the Colonel; "sufficient for the day——"

"Exactly," said John Merton; "only in this case the evil once done would be sufficient for the rest of your days on earth. Do you imagine that a girl of Fanny Stafford's proud temperament would condescend to accept anything at your hands, when she knew that your feelings for her had died out, and that you were probably spreading for another woman exactly the same nets into which she had been entrapped? I know her well enough to be certain that under such circumstances she would refuse, not merely to be supported by you, but even to see you.

What would become of her then? She would take to suicide, the usual resort of her class."

"Most likely she would take to suicide," said the Colonel.

"If she did," said John Merton, very sternly, taking a step in advance, and bringing down his hand upon the table at which the Colonel was sitting, "I don't suppose her death would lie heavily upon your soul; but I would make you answer for it, so help me God!"

"By George, do you threaten me, sir?" said the Colonel, springing to his feet. The next instant he sank easily back into his chair, saying, "Pshaw! the thing is too preposterous; you don't imagine I could fight *you?*"

"I had no such idea, Colonel Orpington; but what I threatened just now I would carry out. If this girl becomes your victim, and if that result which I have just foreshadowed, and which seems to me inevitable, should ensue, I will take care that your name is dragged before the public as the girl's seducer and the cause of her ruin. These are not very moral times, but the gay Lothario stamp of man is rather laughed at nowadays, especially when he has not the excuse of youth for his folly; and when mixed up with his folly there are such awkward episodes as desertion and suicide, people no longer laugh at him, they cut him. The newspapers write articles about him; and his friends, who are doing the same thing themselves, but do not labour under the disadvantage of being found out, shake their heads and are compelled to give him up. From all I have heard of you, Colonel Orpington, you are far too fond of society and too great a favourite in it to risk being treated in such a manner for such a temporary amusement."

"If you have heard anything of me, sir," said the Colonel, rising in a rage, "you may have heard that I never brook confounded impertinence, and I'm d—d if I stand it any longer! I will trouble you to leave this house at once, and never let me set eyes on you again," he added, ringing the bell.

"I trust I shall never have occasion to come across you, Colonel Orpington," said John Merton firmly; "whether I do or not entirely rests upon yourself. Depend upon it, that I shall hold to everything I have said, and that I shall not shrink from

carrying out what I have fully made up my mind to do on account of any menaces."

He bowed slightly to the Colonel, turned round, and slowly walked from the room.

Left to himself, the Colonel took to pacing up and down the library with great strides. He was evidently labouring under great annoyance; he bit his lips and tossed his head in the air, and muttered to himself as he walked up and down.

"That fellow struck the right note at last," he said. "Insolent brute! All that palaver about honest man's fireside, and children calling her mother, and that kind of thing, one has heard a thousand times; but if all happened as he prophesied —and I confess it is the usual ending to such things—and he made a row as he threatened, it would be deuced unpleasant. He is right about the Lothario business being over; and more than right about people grinning at you when you are mixed up in such matters at fifty years of age. And if it were to come to what he suggested, death and that kind of thing, there would probably be a great row. Those infernal newspaper paragraphs about the heartless seducer—they don't like those things at the Court or the Horse Guards; and then one would have to run the gauntlet of the clubs and that kind of thing. By Jove, it's worth considering whether the game is worth the candle, after all!"

At that moment Miss Orpington entered.

"Who was that person, papa?" said she. "I thought I heard you speak quite angrily to him."

"Very likely, my dear," said the Colonel; "he was a very impertinent and unmannerly person from—from those confoundedly troublesome slate-quarries and lead-mines in South Wales."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

DAISY'S LETTER.

LEFT to himself, without George Wainwright to listen to his complaints, to afford him consolation, or even to do him good by the administration of the rough tonic of his advice, Paul Derinzy had a very bad time of it. His attendance at the office was exceedingly irregular; and when he was there he was so preoccupied and *distrait*, that he would not look after his work; which accordingly, there being no George Wainwright to stay after hours and pull it up, went hopelessly into arrears. The good old chief, Mr. Courtney, always inclined to be kind and indulgent, and more especially disposed to civility since he had been to dine with Paul's people in Queen Anne Street (where he found the Captain "a devilish gentleman-like fellow, sir; far superior to the men of the present day, with a remarkable fund of anecdote"), had his patience and his temper very much tried by his young friend's peculiar proceedings; and between the two other occupants of the principal registrar's room, Mr. William Dunlop's life was pretty nearly harried out of him.

"If the arrival of my people in town were to render me as wretched as the arrival of P. D.'s people has rendered P. D.," observed Mr. Dunlop, in confidence to a brother-clerk, "I should begin to think it was not a bad thing being a norphan. I have often thought, Simmons, that I could have done the young-heir business in doublet and trunk-hose—no, that is, the spirit-stirring song of the 'Old English Gentleman'—the young-heir business, smiling from the top of the steps on the assembled tenantry, vide Frith, R.A., his picture of 'Coming of Age,' to be had cheap as an Art Union print. But if to become moped and melancholy, to decline to go odd man for b. and s., and to tell people who propose the speculation to 'go to the

devil'—if that is to be the result of having people and being heir to a property in Dorsetshire, my notion is, that I would sooner serve her Majesty at two-forty, rising to three-fifty at yearly increments of twenty, and be free!"

There was no doubt that there were grounds for Mr. Dunlop's complaints. Paul not merely did not attend to his work, but his manner, which, from its brightness and courtesy, had in the old days won him troops of friends and rendered him everywhere sought for and popular, was now morose and forbidding. He seemed to be aware of this, and consequently went very little into society. To Queen Anne Street he only went when he was absolutely obliged; that is to say, when he felt that he could not decently remain away any longer; but even then his visits were very short, and his mother found him absent and preoccupied. He had, however, taken sufficient notice of what was passing around him to remark the maidenly delicacy, imbued with true feminine tact, with which Annette asked news of George Wainwright, and the hard struggle which she made to conceal her disbelief of the stories which he, Paul, invented to account for his friend's absence.

He had not seen Daisy for the last fortnight. When last they met it was arranged that they should meet as usual in the course of a few days. But two days after, Paul received a little note from her, saying that, owing to Madame Clarisse's absence, her trouble and responsibility were so great that she could not possibly leave the business to take care of itself for ever so short a time. She would let him know as soon as the possible slackness of work permitted her to make an appointment for meeting him in the gardens, and she was his affectionate D.

Paul did not like the tone of this letter. It was certainly much cooler than that of any of the little notes—there were but very few of them—which he had received from Daisy since the commencement of their acquaintance. He did not believe in the excuse one bit. Even in the height of the season she had always managed to get out and see him for a few minutes once or twice a week. Then, as to Madame Clarisse's absence and Daisy's consequent responsibility, did not the very fact of her being at the head of affairs prove that she was her own

mistress, and able to dispose of her own time as she pleased?

There was something at the bottom of it all, Paul thought, which he had not yet fathomed. There was a change in her; that could not be denied—a strange inexplicable change. The girl he met on his return from the country, and who came to him listlessly, with an evident air of preoccupation, which she endeavoured to hide, and with an assumed air of pleasure at his return, which was so ill-assumed as to be very easily seen through, was a totally different being from the loving, teasing, half-coy, half-wayward girl whom he had left behind him.

Paul set himself to work to trace the commencement of this change, and after long cogitation decided that it must have been worked during his absence. What caused it, then? Certainly it arose from no fault of his. He could not charge himself in the slightest degree with neglect of her. He had written to her constantly, freely, and lovingly. He had gone away protesting against his enforced absence; his letters had been filled with joyous expectation of renewed delight at meeting her again; and when he had met her, the warmth of his passion for her, so far from being diminished one jot, had increased and expanded. So that the alteration of their position towards each other which had so evidently come about was her doing, and not his.

In his self-examination, Paul went through all the different phases of the feeling by which he had been actuated towards this girl. He recalled to himself how that at first, dazzled and captivated by her beauty, he had only thought of making her acquaintance, without the idea of any definite end; how that end had in his mind soon taken a form which, though not unnatural in a young man carelessly brought up, and living the loose life which he then led, he now blushed to recall. He recollected the grave displeasure quietly but firmly expressed by Daisy when she saw, as she very speedily did, the position which he proposed for her. And then his mind dwelt on that delicious period when there was no question of what might happen in the future, when they enjoyed and lived in the present, and it was sufficient and all in all to them.

That was the state in which they were when they parted; what was their condition now? Daisy's manner was cold and preoccupied; all the brightness and light, all pretty ways and affectionate regards which she had displayed for him during the summer, seemed to have died out with the summer's heat, and Paul felt that he stood to her in a far more distant position than that which he had occupied at the very commencement of their acquaintance.

He had his hold to establish on her then, to be sure, but he was not without hope or encouragement. Now he had neither to cheer him, and the work was all to be done again. Good God, what did she require of him! He would willingly brave the open frowns and whispered hints of society, of which he had at one time stood in such mortal fear, and would be only too delighted to make her his wife. She knew this. Since his return he had plainly told her so; but the declaration had not merely failed in obtaining a definite answer from her, but had made no difference in her manner towards him. He had argued with her, scolded her, tasked her with the change, and implored her to let him know the reason of it; but he had obtained no satisfactory reply.

"It was his fancy," she said; "she was exactly the same as when they had parted. The life which he had been leading at home had evidently had a very bad effect upon him. She had always feared his return to 'his people,' of whom he thought so much, and with whom he was so afraid of bringing her into contact."

Good heavens, why twit him with that past and bygone folly! Had he not offered to set these people at defiance, and make her his wife?—could he do more?

She replied very quietly that she did not want any family rupture on her account, and that as to the question of their marriage, there was no necessity for any hurry in that matter; and indeed they had very much better wait until they had proved that they were more thoroughly suitable to each other.

And then Paul Derinzy chafed against his chain, and longed to break it, but dared not. He complained bitterly

enough of her bad treatment of him, but he loved her too dearly to renounce the chance of bringing her into a better frame of mind, and restoring to himself the darling Daisy of his passionate worship.

He had no one in whom he could confide, no one whose advice he could seek, in this crisis of his life. George Wainwright was away; and to whom else could he turn? Although he and his mother were in their way very fond of each other, there had never been any kind of confidence between them—certainly not that confidence which would have enabled him to lay bare his heart before her, and ask for her counsel and consolation. Mrs. Derinzy was essentially a worldly woman, and Paul knew perfectly that she would scout the idea of his marrying, as she considered, beneath him; and instead of pouring balm into his wounded spirit, would, after her fashion, try to cicatrise the hurt by telling him that he had had a fortunate escape from an unworthy alliance. His father, long trained in habits of obedience, would have repeated his wife's opinion. Had he been allowed to give his own, it would have been flavoured with that worldly wisdom of which he was so proud, and would probably have been to the effect that, however one treated young persons in that position of life, one certainly did not marry them, and that he could not possibly imagine any son of his doing anything so infernally stupid.

Those who had known Paul Derinzy as the light-hearted, light-headed young man of society, enjoying himself in every possible way, extracting the greatest amount of pleasure out of every hour of his life, and allowing no sense of responsibility to weigh upon him, would hardly have recognised him in the pale, care-worn man with hollow cheeks who might be seen occasionally eating his solitary dinner at the club, but who never joined the gay circle in the smoking-room, or was to be found in any of those haunts of pleasure which formerly he had so assiduously frequented. With Daisy always in his mind, he had an irresistible inclination to moon about those places where he had been in the habit of seeing her.

In the dusk of the evening he would walk for hours up and down George Street, in front of Madame Clarisse's house,

sometimes fancying he recognised Daisy's reflection on the window-blind, and then being half tempted to rush across and seek admission to her at any cost. And he would go down to the spot in Kensington Gardens—now a blank desert of misery—and wander up and down, picturing to himself the delightful summer lounging there, and recalling every item of the conversation which had then been held.

One day, one Saturday half-holiday, Paul, who had not heard from George Wainwright for some days, had been up to the Doctor's establishment to inquire whether any news had been received of his friend, and having been replied to in the negative, he was listlessly returning to town, when the old fascination came upon him, and he struck up past Kensington Palace with the intention of lingering for a few moments in the familiar spot. He was idling along, chewing the cud of a fancy which was far more bitter than sweet, when his desultory footsteps came to a halt as he caught sight of a couple in front of him.

A man and woman walking side by side in conversation. Their backs were towards him, but he recognised Daisy in an instant. The man was tall and of a good figure, and looked like a gentleman, but Paul could not see his face. His first impulse was to rush towards them, but better sense prevailed. His was not the nature to play the spy; so, with a smothered groan, he turned upon his heel, and slowly retraced his steps.

There was an end of it, then. At last he had comprehended the full extent of his misery. All that he had feared had come to pass, and more. She had thrown him over, and he had seen her walking with another man in the very place which up to that time had been rendered sacred to him by the recollection of their meetings there.

There was an end of it; but he would let her know that he was fully aware of the extent of her treachery and baseness. He would go to the club at once, and write to her, telling her all he had seen. He would not reproach her—he thought he would leave that to her own conscience; he would only—he did not know what he would do; his legs seemed to give way

beneath him, his head was whirling round, and he felt as though he should fall prostrate to the ground.

When he reached the Park gates—and how he reached them he never knew—he called a cab and drove to the club. He was hurrying through the hall, when the porter stopped him and handed to him a letter. It was from Daisy. Paul's heart beat high as the well-known writing met his view. He took it with him to the writing-room, which was fortunately empty, and sitting himself at the writing-table, laid the letter before him. He was uncertain whether he would open it or not. Whatever it might contain would be unable to do away with the fact which he had so recently witnessed with his own eyes.

No excuse could possibly explain away the disloyalty with which she had treated him. It would be better, he thought, to return the letter unopened. But then there might be something in it which in future time he might regret not to have seen; some possible palliation of her offence, some expression of regret or softening explanation of the circumstances under which she had betrayed him. And then Paul opened the letter, and read as follows:

"MY DEAR PAUL,—I do not think you will be surprised at what I am about to tell you; and I try to hope that you will not be very much annoyed at it. I knew that it must come very shortly, and I have endeavoured as far as I could to prepare you for the news.

"The pleasant life which we have been leading for the last few months, Paul—and I do not pretend to disguise my knowledge that it has been pleasant to you, any more than I shrink from acknowledging that it has been most delightful to me—has come to an end, and we must never meet again. This should be no tragic ending: there should be no shriek of woe or exclamations of remorse, or mutual taunts and invectives. It is played out, that is all; it has run down, and come naturally to a full-stop, and there is no use in attempting to set it going again.

"I can understand your being horribly enraged when you first read this, and using all sorts of strong language about me,

and vowing vengeance against me. But this will not last; your better sense will come to your aid; in a very little time you will thank me for having released you from obligations the fulfilment of which would have brought misery on your life, and will thank me for having been the first to put an end to an action which was very pleasant for the time it lasted, but which would have been very hopeless in the future. For my part, I don't reproach you, Paul, Heaven knows; I should be an ingrate if I did.

"You have always treated me with the tenderest regard, and only very lately you have done me the highest honour which a man can do a woman, in asking her to become his wife. Don't think I treat this offer lightly, Paul; don't think I am not keenly alive to its value, as showing the affection, if nothing else, which you have, or rather must have had, for me. Do not think that it has been without a struggle that I have made up my mind to act as I am now doing, to write the letter which you now read.

"But suppose I had said Yes, Paul; you know as well as I do the exact position which I should have occupied, and the effect which my occupancy of that position would have had on your future life. It was not—I do not say this with any intention of wounding you—it was not until you clearly found you could get me on no other terms that you made me this offer; and though probably you will not allow it even to yourself, you must know as well as I do, that after a while you would find yourself tied to a wife who was unsuited to you in many ways, and by marrying whom you had alienated your family from you, and disgraced yourself in the opinion of that world which you now profess to despise, but of whose verdict you really stand in the greatest awe.

"And then, Paul, it would be one of two things: either you would hold to me with a dogged defiance, which is not part of your real nature, but which, under the circumstances, you would cultivate, feeling yourself to be a martyr, and taking care to let me know that you felt it—you will deny all this, Paul, but I know you better than yourself; or you would feel me to be a clog upon you, and leave me for the society in which you could

forget that, for the mere indulgence of a passing passion, you had laid upon yourself a burden for life.

"What but misery could come out of either of these two results? Under both of them we should hate each other; for I confess I should not be grateful to you for the enforced companionship which the former presupposes; and under the latter I should not merely hate you, but in all probability should do something which would bring dishonour on your name. You see, I speak frankly, Paul; but I do so for the best. If you had been equally frank with me, I could have told you long since, at the commencement of our acquaintance, of something which would have prevented our ever being more to each other than the merest acquaintances. You told me your name was Paul Douglas; you disguised from me that it was Paul Derinzy. Had I known that, I would have then let you into a secret; I would have told you that I too had in a similar manner been deceiving you by passing under the name of Fanny Stafford, whereas my real name is Fanny Stothard.

"Does not that revelation show you what is to come, Paul? Do you not already comprehend that I am the daughter of a woman who holds a menial position in your father's house, and that this fact would render wider yet the chasm which yawns between our respective classes in society? You do not imagine that your mother would care to recognise in her son's wife the daughter of her servant, or that I should particularly like to become a member of a family in which my cousin's waiting-woman is my own mother.

"I ascertained this fact in sufficient time to have made it, if I had so chosen, the ground for putting an end to our intimacy, and my reason for writing this letter; but I preferred not to do so, Paul. I have put the matter plainly, straightforwardly, and frankly; and I will not condescend to ride off on a quibble, or to pretend that I have been influenced by your want of confidence in withholding your name. You will see—not now, perhaps, but in a very little time—that I have acted for the best, and will be thankful to me for the course which I have taken.

"And recollect, Paul, the breach between us must be final—it

must be a clean cut; and you must not think, even after it has been made, that there are any frayed and jagged points left which are capable, at some time or another, of being reunited. We have seen each other for the last time; we have parted for ever. There must be no question of any interview or adieu; we are neither of us of such angelic tempers that we could expect to meet without reproaches and high words; and I, at all events, should be glad in the future to recall the last loving look in your eyes, and the last earnest pressure of your hand.

"And that mention of the future reminds me, this letter is the last communication you will receive from me; and when you have finished reading it, you must look upon me as someone dead and passed away. If by chance you ever meet me in the street, you must look upon me as the ghost of someone whom you once knew, and forbear to speak to me. It will not be very difficult to imagine this; for, God knows, I shall be no more like the Fanny Stafford whom you have known than the Fanny Derinzy you would have made me. No matter what I am, no matter what I may become, you will have ceased to have any pretext for inquiring into my state; and I distinctly forbid your attempting to interfere with me in the slightest degree. Does that sound harsh, Paul? I do not mean it so; I swear I do not mean it so. If you knew—but you do not, and never shall. You are hot and impetuous and weak; I am cool and clear-brained and strong-minded: you look only at the present; I think for the future. You will repeat all this bitterly, saying that I am right, and that my conduct plainly shows I know exactly how to describe myself; I know you will, I can almost hear you say it. I half wish I could hear you say anything, so that I could listen to your dear voice once again; but that could never be.

"Good-bye, Paul! At some future time, not very long hence, when all this has blown over, and you are in love with, and perhaps married to, someone else, you will acknowledge I was right, and think sometimes not unkindly of me. But I shall never think of you again. Once more, good-bye, Paul! I should like to say, God bless you! if I thought such a prayer from me would be of any use."

Paul Derinzy read this letter through twice, and folded it up and placed it in his pocket. Ten minutes afterwards the writing-room bell rang violently, and the servant, on answering was surprised to find an old gentleman kneeling on the floor, and bending over the prostrate body of Mr. Derinzy, whose face was very white, whose neck-cloth was untied, and who the old gentleman said was in a fit.

CHAPTER XXIX.

RELENTING.

WHEN George Wainwright left the presence of the strange old German doctor, upon whom he had looked with an almost awful anxiety, a half-superstitious hope, it was with an acute sense of disappointment, such as had rarely stung the young man's ordinarily placid and well-disciplined mind. He had the profoundest respect for his father's opinion, the most implicit reliance on his father's judgment; and from the sentence which pronounced the case of Annette hopeless, except under those conditions whose fulfilment he now found it impossible to procure, he never thought of appealing. His father—of whose science in theory, of whose skill in practice, his own experience had offered him innumerable instances—had told him, with genuine concern and with true sympathy, rather than the more formal paternal manner it was the doctor's custom to exhibit towards his son, that this one only hope existed, this solitary chance presented itself. He had caught at the hope; he had endeavoured to reduce the chance to practice; and he had failed.

There was bitterness, there was agony, in the conviction, such as had never fallen to the lot of George Wainwright before, though life had brought him some of those experiences

which Mr. Dunlop was wont to designate as "twisters" too. But then so much depends on the direction, the strength, and the duration of the "twist," and there are some so easily gotten over.

This, however, was not one of them; and George's heart was sorely wrung. The pain was directed cunningly, and strongly applied, and as for its duration—well, George believed, as we all believe when suffering is very keen and very fresh, that it was going to be everlasting. It couldn't be otherwise, indeed, in the sense in which "everlasting" applies itself to this mortal individual life; for did it not mean that the woman he loved, the one woman he really loved and longed for, was doomed for her term of terrestrial existence to the saddest of all destinies, which included utter separation from him? While they both lived, if that fiat should remain unaltered, how should his sorrow be less than everlasting? If it be true that there are certain kinds of trouble, and sharp trouble too, to which men and women do become accustomed, of a surety this was not one of them, but trouble of a vital kind, full of murmuring, of wretchedness, and regret. So long as they both should live—he a sane man, loving this periodically-insane woman as he loved her, with a strong passionate attachment, by no means deficient in the conservative element of intellectual attraction—whence should the alleviation come?

George Wainwright liked pain as little as most men like it; and as he turned his face towards England, discomfited and utterly downcast, he felt, with a sardonic morbidity of feeling, that he would not be disinclined now to exchange his capacity of suffering and his steadiness of disposition for the *volage* fickleness which he was accustomed to despise in many of his associates. If he could get over it, it would be much better for him, and no worse for her, he thought; but the next true and fine impulse of his nature rebuked the foregoing, and made him prize the sentiments which had come to ennoble his life, to check its selfishness and dissipate its ennui, though by the substitution of pain. And for her? He had seen so plainly, so unmistakably the difference in Annette, the new element of hope, anticipation, and enjoyment which her affection for

him had brought into her hitherto darkened life, that the utmost exertion of his common sense failed to make him believe she would be the better for the complete severance between them which reason dictated to him ought to be the upshot of the failure of his enterprise.

"It is better to have loved," he repeated to himself, as he sat moodily in the railway-carriage on his return journey, unheeding alike the trimly-cultivated country through which he was passing, and the profusion of flimsy literature, journalistic and other, with which the cushions were strewn—"it is better to have loved——" And then he thought, "She is not *lost*. She lives, and I can see her. I may cheer and alleviate her life, though it may never be blessed with union. When the dark days come, they will be less dark to her, because when she emerges into light again, it will be to find me; and at her best and brightest—ah, how good and bright that is!—she will be happier and better because of me. Good God! am I so weak and so selfish that I cannot accept what there is in this of blessing, without pining for that which can never be?"

Thus, striving manfully with his bitter disappointment, and strengthening himself with earnest and manly resolutions, George Wainwright returned to England. Perhaps the sharpest pang he felt, sharper even than that with which he had heard Dr. Hildebrand's decided refusal and had obeyed his peremptory dismissal, was caused by the momentary shrinking from the sight of Annette, which made itself felt as he approached the place of her abode. At first there had been wild, reckless longing to see her, longing in which love was intensified by pity and sharpened by grief; then came this instinctive dread and lingering. He had left her with so much hope, so much energy, such strong conviction; he was returning with none of these. He was returning to look in the dear face so often overhung with the mysterious fitful veil of insanity, and to be forced to feel that it could never be given to mortal hand to lift that veil, and to throw it aside for ever. And though his first impulse had been to hasten back to England with all possible speed, when he arrived in London he lingered and hesitated about announcing himself at the residence of the Derinzys.

Should he go to his father's chambers at the Albany in the first instance, and tell him how his hopes had collapsed?—not because, as Dr. Wainwright had supposed, the eccentric and famous German *savant* was dead, but because the rampant vitality of professional jealousy had utterly closed his heart to George's pleadings, and even obscured the ambition to make one cure more, which, to the joy of many a heart, has been found too strong to be resisted by more than one celebrated physician *en retraite.* Yes, he would see his father in the first instance; it would give him nerve. Indeed, he ought to do so for another reason.

He must henceforth be doubly careful in his dealings with Annette; he who—it would be absurd to disguise his knowledge of the fact—had assumed greater importance in her life than any other being, who noted and managed her, and swayed her temper and her fancies as no one beside; and this was exactly the conjuncture in which the advice, the guidance, of the physician charged with her case would be indispensable. George would obtain it and obey it to the utmost. Supposing his father, in the interest of his patient and his son, were to pronounce that under the circumstances it would be advisable that the young people should not meet, could George undertake to obey the behests of the physician or the counsel of the father? This was a difficult question. In such a case he would appeal promptly to that excellent understanding, that taken-for-granted equality which had subsisted between him and Dr. Wainwright, and put it to him that he was prepared to sacrifice himself for the welfare of the girl, and to lend to her blighted life all the alleviation which his friendship and his society could afford, while strictly guarding himself from the avowal of any warmer feeling.

Assisted by these resolutions, and perhaps not quite unconscious that he would have been slow to credit any other person who might have formed them with the courage to maintain them, George Wainwright presented himself before his father. The Doctor received him kindly, and listened to the account of his fruitless journey without any evidence of surprise.

"I am glad the old man is still living," said Dr. Wainwright, when George had finished his story; "but sorry to find he is not so great a man as I had believed him to be. No great man allows a personal feeling, prejudice, or pique to interfere with his theories or hamper his actions. The idea of his declining such a case because *I* had been unsuccessful with the patient! Why, that ought, even according to his own distorted notions, to be the strongest reason for his going at it with a will. However," and the "mad doctor" laughed a low laugh and rubbed his hands gently together, "there are queer freaks and cranks of the human mind to be seen outside of lunatic asylums."

George was a little impatient of his father's attention being rather given to Dr. Hildebrand than to his feelings under the circumstances, and he recalled it by the abrupt question:

"What is to be done now?"

"Nothing," replied Dr. Wainwright; "nothing in the sense of cure, nothing additional in the way of treatment."

"May I—may I safely continue to see her?"

The son knew well how thoroughly, under the habitual professional composure of his manner, the father comprehended and felt the deep importance of the reply he was about to make.

"The question of safety," he said, "mainly concerns *you*. Do you think you would do wisely in continuing to seek the society of this poor girl, feeling as you do towards her, and knowing she cannot be your wife?"

"My dear father," replied George with deliberation, "I do not think, I do not say it would be wise; I only say it is one of those foolish things which are inevitable. Put me aside in the matter, and tell me only about *her*."

"Then," said the Doctor, "I have no hesitation in saying I do not think you can harm her. Your society cheers and amuses her. In her state there is little danger of the awakening of any deep and permanent feeling. Should such a danger arise, I should be sure to perceive and prevent it."

After a long conversation, the father and son parted. Dr. Wainwright felt considerable regret that George's feelings should be thus involved; but he reasoned upon the case, according to his lights and convictions, and did not exaggerate

its importance, believing that his son was not the sort of man to make himself perfectly uncomfortable about any woman whom it was quite impossible he should marry. He thought about the whole party after his son had left him—of Annette with liking and compassion; of George with affection, and a recognition of the difference which existed between his own mind and his son's; and of the Derinzys with supreme contempt. Perhaps, in the long list of his friends and patients, there were not to be found two individuals whom Dr. Wainwright—a man not given to venerating his fellow-creatures—more thoroughly despised than Captain and Mrs. Derinzy. And then he turned to his books again, and forgot them.

From his father's chambers in the Albany, George Wainwright went direct to the Derinzys' house. Mrs. Derinzy was at home, as was Miss Annette; but Mr. Wainwright could not on this occasion have the pleasure of seeing the Captain. So far, everything was propitious to that gentleman's wishes; and he entered the small back drawing-room, which no one but a house-agent or an upholsterer would have called a boudoir, where Annette was usually to be found, lounging near a flower-crowded balcony, with the feeling of joy at seeing her again decidedly predominant. He was philosophic, but he was something more than a philosopher; and this afflicted girl had become inexpressibly dear to him, had inspired him with a love in which selfishness had a strangely small share.

Annette was in her usual place, and she rose to meet George with an expression of simple unaffected pleasure. Mrs. Derinzy, who was also in the room, greeted him with cold politeness. She was not so foolish as to persist in believing she could have carried her design to a successful issue in any case; but she was quite sufficiently unjust to resent George's influence over Annette, though she knew it had never been employed against her, and though she felt a malicious satisfaction in contemplating the hopelessness of the affair.

"If anyone would marry an insane woman, knowing all about her, it certainly would not be a mad doctor's son," thought Mrs. Derinzy, and was pleased to feel that other people's plans had to "gang a-gley" as completely as her own.

George took Mrs. Derinzy's manner very calmly and contentedly. He did not care about Mrs. Derinzy or her manner. He was thinking of Annette, and reading the indications of health, or the opposite, in her pleased agitated face.

"Where have you been, and why have you stayed away so long?" was the first address to George; and she could hardly have selected one more embarrassing. But he got out of the difficulty by the plea which is satisfactory to every woman except one's wife—possibly because she alone can estimate its real value—the plea that "business" had taken him on a flying tour to Germany. He entertained her with an account of his travels, and had at least the satisfaction of seeing her brighten up into more than her customary intelligence, and assume an expression of happiness which had been singularly wanting in her sweet young face when he had first seen it, and which he believed he was the only person who had ever summoned up. It was not difficult for George, sitting near the handsome girl, so bright and so gentle for him alone, in the pleasant hush of the refined-looking room, to persuade himself that such a state of things would satisfy him, and be the very best possible for her. It was not difficult for him to forget that the Derinzys were not habitual inhabitants of London; and that if his relations with Annette were destined to assume no more definite form, he could have no valid excuse for presenting himself at Beachborough without the invitation which Mrs. Derinzy's demeanour afforded him no hope of obtaining.

But George's delusive content was not destined to be lasting. At a break in the conversation, which, with the slightest possible assistance from Mrs. Derinzy, he was carrying on with Annette, he asked the elder lady for news of Paul, adding that he had not written to his friend during his absence, and had not yet had time to apprise him of his return.

"We have seen hardly anything of Paul of late," said Mrs. Derinzy in a tone of strong displeasure. "My residence in London has not procured me much of the society of my son; and since you left town, I cannot say we know anything about him."

"This looks badly," thought George. "With all his determi-

nation to resist his mother, Paul would not neglect her if things were not going ill with him. I must see to him."

That visit was memorable, and in more ways than one. It was the last which George Wainwright made to Mrs. Derinzy in the character of a mere friendly acquaintance, and it confirmed him in his belief, as full of fear as of hope, that Annette loved him.

His absence had not been of long duration, but it sent him back with renewed zest to his painting, his books, and his music, and there was a strong need within him of a little rest and seclusion. He felt he must "think it out;" not in foreign scenes or amid distractions, but thus, amid his actual present surroundings, in the very place where he should have to "live it down." So it came to pass that he did not forthwith go in search of Paul, but contented himself with writing him a note and bidding him come to him—a summons which, to George's surprise, his friend neither responded to nor obeyed. His leave had not expired, and a few days of the solitude his soul loved were within his reach.

Beyond his customary evening visit to Madame Vaughan—in whose appearance he noted a change which aroused in him apprehensions shared by her attendants and the resident doctor, but whose intelligence was even more than usually bright and sympathetic, though her delusion remained unchanged—George Wainwright went nowhere and saw no one for three days. At the end of that time his seclusion was interrupted by an unexpected visitor.

It was his father. And his father had so manifestly something important to communicate, that George, whose sensitive temperament had one feminine tendency, that which renders a man readily apprehensive of ill news, started up and said:

"There is something wrong! Miss Derinzy——"

"Sit down, George, and keep quiet," said the Doctor kindly, regarding his son's impetuosity with a good-natured critical amusement. "There's nothing in the least wrong with Miss Derinzy; and though a rather surprising event has happened, it is not at all of an unpleasant nature—indeed, quite the reverse. You have made a conquest, a most valuable conquest, my dear boy."

"Who is she?" said George, with a not very successful smile. "Have you come to propose to me on the part of a humpy heiress?"

"Not in the least. There is no *she* in the case. You have made a conquest of old Hildebrand, and its extent and validity are tolerably clearly proved, I think, considering that he has gotten rid of an antipathy of long standing, surmounted a deeply-rooted prejudice. He has actually written to me—to me, the man who, in his capacity of doctor and *savant*, he holds in abhorrence, who, I am sure, he sincerely believes to be a quack and an impostor. He has written me a most friendly original letter, a curiosity of literature even in German; but he thought proper to air his English, and the production took me nearly an hour to read."

Dr. Wainwright took a letter out of his pocket as he was speaking—a big square letter, a sheet of coarse-grained, thin, blue paper, sealed with a blotch of brown wax, and directed in a most crabbed and unmanageable hand, the address having been subsequently sprinkled, with unnecessary profusion, with glittering sticky sand. George glanced at the document with anxious eyes.

"I don't intend to inflict the reading of it on you," continued the Doctor. "I can tell you its contents in a few words. Dr. Hildebrand consents to undertake the treatment of Miss Derinzy on your account, provided the young lady be formally confided to his care by her relatives, on my authorisation; that I state in writing and with the utmost distinctness all the particulars and the duration of the case, and acknowledge that it surpasses my ability to cure it. In addition, I am to undertake to publish in one of the medical journals an account of the case—supposing Miss Derinzy to be cured, of which Hildebrand writes as a certainty—and give him all the credit."

George had punctuated his father's calm speech with various exclamations, of which the Doctor had not taken any notice; but now he said:

"My dear father, this is a wonderful occurrence; but you could not consent to such conditions."

"Indeed! and why not? Do you think I ought to be as

foolish and as egotistical as that incomparably sagacious and skilful Deutscher, whose conduct I reprobated so severely, and whom you apparently expect me to imitate? No, George; professional etiquette isn't a bad thing in its way, but it should not be permitted to override common sense, humanity, and one's simple duty. If some small bullying of me, if some ludicrous shrill crowing over me, enter into the scheme of this odd-tempered sage, so be it. He shall make the experiment; and if he succeed, nobody except yourself will be more heartily rejoiced than the doctor who failed."

George shook hands with his father silently, and there was a brief pause. Dr. Wainwright resumed:

"This queer old fellow assigns the very great impression which you produced upon him as the cause of his change of mind. You are a fine fellow, it appears; a young man of high tone and of worthy sentiments, a young man devoid of the narrowness and coldness of the self-seeking and gold-loving English nation. A pang, it seems, entered the breast of the learned Deutscher when he reflected that on an impulse—whose righteousness he defends, without the smallest consideration that his observations are addressed to me—he refused to extend the blessing of his unequalled service and unfailing skill to an afflicted young lady of whose amiability it was impossible for him any doubt to entertain, considering that she was by so superior a young man beloved. Under the influence of this pang of conscience, stimulated no doubt by the wish to achieve a great success at my expense, Hildebrand begs to be put in communication with you, and with the friends of the so interesting young lady, and promises all I have already told you. And now, we must act on this without any delay. A little management will be necessary as regards the affectionate relatives of Miss Derinzy."

George was a little surprised at his father's tone. It was the first time he had departed so far from his habitual reticence in anything connected with professional matters. But a double motive was now influencing the Doctor: interest of a genuine nature in his son's love-affair, and the true anxiety for the result of a scientific experiment which is inseparable from real

knowledge and skill. The family politics of the Derinzys were to be henceforth openly discussed between Dr. Wainwright and his son.

"You do not suppose they will make any objection? They can have no wish but for her recovery."

"I should have said that her recovery would not have concerned or interested them particularly a short time ago," said Dr. Wainwright calmly. "When they were not yet aware that their plan for marrying their niece to their son could not be carried into effect—the money in Paul's possession, and their own claims upon it amply satisfied, as of course they would have been—I don't think the Captain, at all events, would have concerned himself much further about the condition of his daughter-in-law, or cared whether Paul's wife were mad or sane. But all this is completely changed now, by Paul's refusal to marry his cousin. The girl's restoration to perfect sanity is the sole chance for the Derinzys getting hold of any portion of her property, by testamentary disposition or otherwise; as on her coming of age, the circumstances must, of course, be legally investigated."

"Would not Captain Derinzy be Annette's natural heir in the event of her death?" asked George.

"No," replied the Doctor. "I see you are surprised; and I must let you into a family secret of the Derinzys in order to explain this to you. They have some reason for believing, for fearing, that Miss Derinzy's mother is living. At another time I will tell you as much as I know of the story; for the present this is enough to make you understand the pressure which can be brought to bear, in order to induce Captain and Mrs. Derinzy to follow out the instructions I mean to give them."

"I understand," said George. "And now tell me what you intend to advise. I suppose I am not to appear in this at all?"

"Not at present, certainly. I should not fancy the Captain and Mrs. Derinzy knowing anything about your flight in search of old Hildebrand. It is preferable that I should gravely and authoritatively declare their niece to require the care of this eminent physician, of whose competence I am thoroughly

assured; and I shall direct that Miss Derinzy be placed under his charge as authoritatively, but also in as matter-of-course a fashion, as if it were merely a case of 'the mixture as before.' There is no better way of managing people than of steadily ignoring the fact that any management is requisite, and also that remonstrance is possible. I shall adopt that course, and I answer for my success. Miss Derinzy shall be under Dr. Hildebrand's care in a week from this time; and I trust the experiment will be successful."

"Are you going there now?"

"I am going there at once."

"I should like to go with you—not into the house, you know—so as to know as soon as possible."

"Very well; come along, then. You can sit in the carriage, while I go in and see my patient. Be quick; we can discuss details on our way."

Two minutes more saw George Wainwright seated beside his father in one of the least pretentious and best-appointed broughams in London, to the displacement of sundry books and pamphlets, the indefatigable Doctor's inseparable companions.

"You are acquainted with Mrs. Stothard, I presume," said the Doctor, "and aware of her true position in the family: partly nurse, partly companion, partly keeper to my patient."

George winced as his father completed this sentence, but unperceived.

"Yes," he replied, "I do know her: a disagreeable, designing, unpleasant person—strong-minded decidedly."

"Strong-bodied too; and needing to be so sometimes, I am sorry to say."

George winced again.

"I shall give my directions to *her*. She must accompany Miss Derinzy. She is faithful to the girl's interest; and would be a cool and deliberate opponent of the Derinzys if there were any occasion for open opposition, which there will not be."

"She is of a strange, concentrated nature," said George. "I don't think she loves Annette."

"Oh dear no; I should say not," rejoined the Doctor. "I

fancy she does not love anybody—not even herself much—and cares for nothing in the world beyond her interests; but she is wise enough to know they will be best served by her fulfilment of her duty, and practical enough to act on the knowledge—not an invariable combination. She has behaved well in Miss Derinzy's case; and she may always be relied upon to do what I tell her."

"Should no one else accompany Annette?"

"Well, yes; I think I shall send one of our own people—Collis is a capital fellow, as good as any courier at travelling, and can be trusted not to talk when he comes back. Yes, I'll send Collis," said the Doctor, in a tone of decision.

George approved of this. Collis was an ally of his. Collis was a special favourite with Madame Vaughan; and in his occasional absences, George always left him with a kind of additional charge of corridor No. 4.

"That seems a first-rate arrangement, sir," said he; "I hope you may find you can carry it out in all particulars."

Dr. Wainwright did not reply; he merely smiled. He was accustomed to carry out his arrangements in all particulars. They were nearing their destination.

"I wonder how Annette will take it: whether she will object—will dislike it very much?" George said uneasily.

His father turned towards him, and at the same minute half rose, for they had arrived at the door of the Derinzys' house.

"She will take it very well, she will not object," he said impressively; "for I am going to try an experiment on my own part. I mean to tell her the whole truth about herself."

He stepped out of the carriage and went into the house.

During Dr. Wainwright's absence, George recalled every incident of his interview with Dr. Hildebrand with mingled solicitude and amusement. The caprice and inconsistency of the old man were, on the one hand, alarming; but they were, as George felt, counterbalanced by a certain conviction of ability, of knowledge, an entire and cheerful confidence in his skill, which he irresistibly inspired. If, indeed, it should be well-founded confidence; if incidentally Annette should owe

her restoration to perfect mental health to the man who loved her; if the result of this should be their marriage under circumstances which should no longer involve a defiance of prudence—then George felt that he should acknowledge there was more use in living, more good and happiness in this mortal life, than he had hitherto been inclined to believe in.

He glanced occasionally up at the windows; not that he expected to see Annette, who invariably occupied the back drawing-room.

Presently the white-muslin blinds were stirred, and Dr. Wainwright appeared at one of the windows, and in the opposite angle Captain Derinzy, who, to judge by the expression of his countenance, was, if not pronouncing his favourite ejaculation, "Oh, damn!" at least thinking it. It was quite plain the conference was not pleasant; and George could see his father's face set and stern. After a few minutes the speakers moved away from the window; and then a quarter of an hour elapsed, during which George found patient waiting very difficult. At the end of that time Dr. Wainwright reappeared, and got into the carriage.

"Well," questioned George, "what did Captain Derinzy say?"

"Never mind what Captain Derinzy said. He is a fool, as well as one or two other things I could name, if it were worth while. But it isn't. He must do as he is bid; and that is all we need care about. I have seen Mrs. Derinzy and Mrs. Stothard, and settled it all with them. Miss Derinzy will be ready to start in three days from the present."

"You did not see Annette?"

"No, of course not. My interview with her will not be an affair of twenty minutes. I shall see her early to-morrow morning, and make it all right. And now, my dear boy, I am going to set you down. I have given as much time to the *affaire* Derinzy as I can spare at present. I shall write to Hildebrand to-night, and you had better write to him too, in your best German and most sentimental style. Good-bye for the present."

Dr. Wainwright pulled the check-string, the carriage

stopped, and George was deposited at a street-corner. His father was immersed in a pamphlet before he was out of sight.

George saw Annette once, by special permission of Dr. Wainwright, during the three days which sufficed for her preparations. He had been strictly enjoined to avoid all agitating topics of conversation, and was not supposed by Annette to be acquainted with the facts of the case, or the nature of the interview which had taken place as arranged by Dr. Wainwright. While studiously obeying his father's injunctions, George watched Annette narrowly as he cautiously spoke of the Doctor, towards whom she had never displayed the smallest liking or confidence, and he perceived that the disclosures which had been made to her had already produced a salutary effect. There was less versatility in her manner, and more cheerfulness, and she spoke voluntarily and with grateful appreciation, although vaguely, of Dr. Wainwright. She alluded freely to her projected journey; and it was rather hard for George to conceal that he had some previous knowledge on the subject. Her manner, modest and artless as it was, could not fail to be interpreted favourably to himself by the least vain of men; and when the moment of parting came, it needed his strong sense of the all-importance of discretion to enable him to restrain his emotion, to conceal his consciousness of the impending crisis. When the interview was over, and George had taken leave of Annette, when he went away with the memory of a sweet, tranquil, *sane* smile, as the last look on her face, he was glad.

No mention had been made by Mrs. Derinzy of her son, by Annette of her cousin, and George had been so absorbed in the interest of this strange and exciting turn of affairs, that he had not thought of his friend. But when he had, from a point of view whence he was not visible, watched the departure of Miss Derinzy, Mrs. Stothard, and Annette's maid, under the charge and escort of the trustworthy and carefully-instructed Collis, as he turned slowly away from the railway-station when the tidal-train had rushed out of sight, he said to himself:

"Now I must go and look after Paul."

CHAPTER XXX.

DAISY'S RECANTATION.

THERE was no doubt about it, Paul was very ill indeed. The doctor, when he came, pronounced the young man to be in a very critical state, and gave it as his opinion that an attack of brain-fever was impending. This confidence was given to George, for whom Paul's landlady had sent at once, immediately on her lodger being brought home. The doctor—who was no other than little Doctor Prater, the well-known West-End physician, who is looked upon, and not without reason, as the medical *ami des artistes*—took George aside, and probably without knowing it, put to him as regards Paul the same question which Doctor Turton asked Oliver Goldsmith, "Whether there was anything on his mind?" The response was pretty much the same in both cases. George shook his head and shrugged his shoulders, and admitted that his friend had been "rather upset lately."

"Ah, my dear sir," said the little doctor, "not my wish to pry into these matters; man of the world, see so much of this sort of thing in the pursuance of a large practice, could tell at once that our poor friend had some mental shock. Lady, I suppose? Ah well, must not inquire; generally is at his time of life; later, digestion impaired, bank broken; but in youth generally a lady. I am afraid he is going to be very bad; at present *ægrotat animo magis quam corpore*, as the Latin poet says; but he will be very bad, I have not the least doubt."

"It's a bad business," said George dolefully, "a very bad business. He ought to be nursed, of course; and though I have heard him speak of the woman of the house as kind and attentive and all that, I don't know that one could expect her to give her time to attend to a sick man."

"Our young friend will require a good deal of attention, my

dear sir," said the little doctor; "for night-work, at all events, he must have some professional person. What did you say our young friend's name was? Mr. Derinzy. Ah, the name is familiar to me as—yes, to be sure, great house in the City, millionaire and that kind of thing; and your name, my dear sir?"

"My name is Wainwright," said George, smiling in spite of himself at the little man's volubility.

"Wainwright! not son of——My dear sir, I am glad to make your acquaintance; one of the brightest ornaments of our profession; any care that I should have bestowed on this interesting case will be redoubled now that I know that our poor young friend here is a friend of yours. You will kindly take care that these prescriptions are made up at Balsam and Balmelow's, if you please; must have the best of drugs in these cases, and no other house is so much to be depended upon. Now I must run away; I will look in again in the evening; and during my absence I will make arrangements for the night-nurse. The attendance in the daytime I must look to you to provide. Good-day, my dear sir." And wringing George's hand warmly, the little man trotted off, jumped into his brougham, and was driven away to inspect, prescribe for, and chatter with a dozen other cases within the next few hours.

George sat down by the bedside and bent over its occupant, who was tossing restlessly from side to side, gazing about him with vacant eyes, and muttering and moaning in his delirium. What were the words, incoherent and broken, issuing from his parched lips? "My darling, my darling, stay by me now—no more horrible parting—never again that scornful look! Daisy, say you did not mean it when you wrote; say there is no one else—to-morrow, darling, in the old place—come and tell me your mind—my wife, my darling!"

These words were uttered with such intensity of earnestness—and although Paul's glance was never settled, his eyes roving here and there as he tossed and flung about his arms on the bed, there was such a piteous look in his face—that George Wainwright's emotion overcame him, and two big tears rolled down his cheeks.

"This will never do," said he, brushing them hastily; "it is as I thought, and that little doctor was right in his random hit. This affair with the girl has assumed proportions which I never suspected. Poor dear Paul used to make it out bad enough; but I had no notion that it had come to any crisis, or indeed, if it had, that he would suffer from it in this way. Now what is to be done? I think the first thing will be to see this young lady, and bring her to her bearings. If she has thrown Paul over, as I half suspeet she has, I must let her know the consequences of her work, and see whether she persists in abiding by her determination. It may be only some lovers' quarrel; Paul is a mere boy in these matters, and hotheaded enough to take *au sérieux* what may have been only the result of pique or woman's whim; in that case, when she finds the effect that her quarrel has had upon him, she will probably repent, and her penitence will aid in bringing him round. On the other hand, if she still continues obdurate, one may be able to point out to him the fact that he is eminently well rid of so heartless a person. Not but what my little experience in such matters," said George with a sigh, "teaches me that lovers are uncommonly hard to convince of whatever they do not wish to believe."

In pursuance of this determination George Wainwright, so soon as he had installed the landlady in Paul's apartment as temporary nurse, started off in search of Daisy. He had listened to so many of poor Paul's confidences that he knew where the girl was to be found, and made his way straight to George Street.

Madame Clarisse was still away, and Daisy continued her occupancy of the little furnished rooms, into which George was ushered on inquiring for Miss Stafford. The rooms were empty on George's entrance, and he walked round them, examining the various articles of furniture and decoration with very contemptuous glances. Presently Daisy entered, and George stood transfixed in admiration. She looked magnificently handsome; the announcement of the name of her visitor had brought a bright flush into her cheek, and anticipating a stormy interview, she had come prepared to do battle with all the strength at her command, and accordingly assumed a cold and haughty air which became her immensely.

The transient glimpses which George had had of her that day in Kensington Gardens, though it had given him a general notion of her style, had by no means prepared him for the sight of such rare beauty. He was so taken aback that he allowed her to speak first.

"Mr. Wainwright, I believe?" said Daisy with a slight inclination of her head.

"That's my name," said George, coming to himself.

"The servant told me that you asked for me, that you wished to see me; I am Miss Stafford."

"The servant explained my wishes correctly," said George; "I have come to see you, Miss Stafford, on a very important and, I grieve to add, a very unpleasant matter."

Daisy looked at him steadily. "Will you be seated?" she said, motioning him to a chair, at the same time taking one herself.

"I have come to you," said George, bending forward and speaking in a low and earnest tone of voice, "on behalf of Mr. Paul Derinzy. Not that I am sent by him; I have come of my own accord. You may be aware, Miss Stafford, that I am Mr. Derinzy's intimate friend, and possess his confidence in no common degree."

"I have heard Mr. Derinzy frequently mention your name, and always with the greatest regard," said she.

"If we were merely going to speak the jargon of the world, Miss Stafford, I might say that I could return the compliment," said George. "However, what I wish you to know is, that in his confidence with me Paul Derinzy had spoken openly and frankly of his affection for you, and, indeed, made me acquainted with all the varieties of his doubts, fears, and other phases of his attachment."

Daisy bowed again very coldly.

"You and Paul are both very young, Miss Stafford," continued George, "and I have the misfortune of being much older than either of you. This, however, has its advantage perhaps, in enabling me to speak more frankly and impartially than I otherwise could. You must not be annoyed at whatever I find it necessary to say, Miss Stafford; for the situation is a very

grave one, and more than you can at present imagine depends upon the decision at which you may arrive."

"Pray go on, Mr. Wainwright," said Daisy; "you will find me thoroughly attentive to all you have to say."

"I must be querist as well as pleader, and introduce some cross-examination into my speech, I am afraid," said George; "but you may depend on my neither saying nor asking anything more than is absolutely necessary. And in the first place let me tell you, what indeed you already know, that this boy loves you with all the ardour of a very affectionate disposition. I don't know whether you set much store by that, Miss Stafford; I do know that young ladies of the present day indulge in so many flirtations, and see so many shams and counterfeits of the passion, that they are scarcely able to recognise real love when they see it, and hardly ever able to appreciate it. But it is a thing that, when once obtained, should not be lightly let go; and indeed, Owen Meredith thinks quite right—you read poetry, I know, Miss Stafford; I recolleet Paul having told me so—when he says:

> Beauty is easy enough to win,
> But one isn't loved every day."

"I presume it was not to quote from Owen Meredith that you wished to see me, Mr. Wainwright," said Daisy, looking up at him quietly.

George stared at her for a moment, but was not one bit disconcerted.

"No," he said, "it was not; "but I am in the habit of using quotation when I think it illustrates my meaning, and those lines struck me as being rather apt. However, we come back to the fact that Paul Derinzy was, and I believe is, very much in love with you. From what he gave me to understand, I believe I am right in saying that that passion was at one time returned. I believe—I wish to touch as lightly as possible on unpleasant matters—I believe that recently there has been some interruption of the pleasant relation which existed between you—an interruption emanating from you—and that Paul has consequently been very much out of spirits. Am I right?"

"You are very frank and candid with me, Mr. Wainwright,"

said Daisy, "and I will endeavour to answer you in the same manner. I perfectly admit that the position which Mr. Derinzy and I occupy towards each other is changed, and changed by my desire."

"You will not think me impertinent or exacting—you certainly will not when you know all I have to tell you—if I ask what was the reason for that change?"

Daisy's face flushed for an instant, then she said:

"A woman's reason—because I wished it."

George nodded as though he perfectly comprehended her; but he gazed at her all the time.

"May I ask, has this altered state of feeling come to a head? has there been any open and decisive rupture between you lately?"

"If you are not sufficiently in Mr. Derinzy's confidence to have that information from him, I scarcely think you ought to ask it of me," said Daisy.

"Unfortunately, Mr. Derinzy is not at present in a position to answer me."

"Not in a position to—— What do you mean?" asked Daisy, leaning forward.

"I will tell you before I go," said George. "In the meantime, perhaps you will kindly reply to me."

"There has been no actual quarrel between us," said the girl—"that is to say, no personal quarrel; but——" and she spoke with so much hesitation, that George instantly said:

"But you have taken some decisive action."

Daisy was silent.

"You have told him that all must be over between you; that you would not see him again, or something to that effect."

"I—I wrote him a letter conveying that decision," said Daisy slowly.

"And you addressed to him——"

"As usual, at his club."

"By Jove, that's it!" said George, springing up. "Now, Miss Stafford, let me tell you the effect of that letter. Paul

Derinzy was picked up from the floor of the club-library in a fit!"

"Good God!" cried Daisy.

"One moment," continued George, holding up his hands. "He was carried home insensible, and now lies between life and death. He is delirious and knows no one, but lies tossing to and fro on his bed, ever muttering your name, ever recalling scenes which have been passed in your company. When I saw him in this state, when I heard those groans, and recognised them as the utterances of the mental agony which he was suffering, I thought it my duty to come to you. Understand, I make no *ad misericordiam* appeal. There is no question of my throwing myself on your feelings, and imploring you to have pity on this boy. I imagine that, even with all his passion for and devotion to you, he is far too proud for that, and would disclaim my act so soon as he knew of it. But, loving him as I do, I come to you and say, 'This is your work.' What steps you should take, if any, it is for you to determine. I say nothing, advise nothing, hint nothing, save this: if what you wrote in that letter to Paul was final and decisive, the result of due reflection, the conviction that you could not be happy with him, then stand by it and hold to it; for if you were to give way merely for compassion's sake, his state would be even worse than it is now. But if you spoke truth to me at the beginning of this interview, if your dismissal of Paul was, as you described it, a woman's whim, conceived without adequate reason, and carried out in mere wantonness, I say to you, that if this boy dies—and his state even now is most critical—his death will lie at your door."

Daisy had been listening with bent head and averted eyes. All evidence of her having heard what George had said lay in a nervous fluttering motion of her hand, involuntary and beyond her control. When George ceased, she looked up, and said in a hard, dry voice:

"What will you have me do?"

"I told you at first that I would give you no advice, that I would make no suggestion as to the line of conduct you

should pursue. That must be left entirely to the promptings of your heart, and—excuse me, Miss Stafford, I am sadly old-fashioned, and still believe in the existence of such things—your conscience."

"Is he—is he so very ill?" asked Daisy in a trembling voice.

"He is very dangerously ill," said George; "he could not be worse. But understand, I don't urge this to influence your decision, nor must you let it weigh with you. Your action in this matter must be the result of calm deliberation and self-examination. To act on an impulse which you will repent of when the excitement is over, is worse than to leave matters where they are."

"He—he is delirious, you say?" asked Daisy; "he does not recognise anyone?"

"No, he is quite delirious," said George. "He will have to be carefully attended, and I am now going to see after a nurse. So," he added, rising from his chair, "having discharged my duty, I will now proceed on my way. I am sorry, Miss Stafford, that on my first visit to you I should have been the bearer of what, to me at least, is such sad news."

Then he bowed in his old-fashioned way, and took his departure.

After George left her, Daisy dropped back into the chair which she had occupied during his visit, and sat gazing vacantly into the fire.

Calm deliberation and self-examination! Those were what that strange earnest-looking man, Mr. Wainwright, had said he left her to. In the state of anxiety and excitement in which she found herself, the one was impossible, and she shrank from the other. Self-examination—what would that show her? A girl, first winning, then trifling with the affections of a warm-hearted young fellow, who worshipped her and was ready to sacrifice everything in life for her. And the same girl, hitherto so proud in her virtue and her self-command, paltering and chaffering for her honour with a man, the best thing which could be said about whom was, that he had spoken plainly and made no secret of his intentions. Ah, good heavens, in what

a miserable state of mental blindness and self-deception had she been living during the past few weeks! on the brink of what a moral precipice had she been idly straying with careless feet! Thinking of these things, Daisy buried her face in her hands, and sought relief in a flood of tears. Then, suddenly springing up, she cried:

"It is not too late! Thank God for that! Not too late to undo all that my wickedness has brought about. Not too late to prove my devotion to him. Mr. Wainwright said he was going to see after a nurse. There shall be no occasion for that. When my darling Paul comes to himself, he shall find his nurse installed at his pillow."

Very long odds against Colonel Orpington's chance now!

CHAPTER XXXI.

SUSPENSE.

GEORGE WAINWRIGHT was by no means unconscious that he had done anything but a friendly act towards the Derinzys, by making himself accessory to the reconciliation which he foresaw as the inevitable result of the meeting between Paul and Daisy. He quite understood that he should be regarded in the light of an enemy by Paul's father and mother; and that, should circumstances turn out so happily as to lead to an avowal of his feelings towards Annette, he would have laid himself open to the imputation of the meanest of motives, in encouraging his friend to a step which should at once remove him from rivalry for the lady's hand and competition for her fortune. The attainment of Annette's majority would set her free from the guardianship of her uncle; but if her infirmity of mind continued—and it would then be her relatives' interest to prove the fact which it

had been their interest to conceal—it would be a curious question how Captain Derinzy would act. George held a very decided opinion of Annette's uncle, and he felt very little doubt that the "old scoundrel," as he designated him in his meditations, would take measures to prove the girl's insanity in order to bar her from marriage or the testamentary disposition of her property. If anyone else had been her legal heir, George felt that, if the hope of her restoration failed, it would have been possible to make terms, at least to secure secrecy; but not in the case of Captain Derinzy, especially under the circumstances which he felt were now shaping themselves into form. Greed, spite, revenge, and exasperation would all combine to inspire the Captain with a determination, in which George had no doubt he would be warmly supported by Mrs. Derinzy, to do his worst with the least possible delay.

But George, beyond feeling that they required consideration and cautious handling, cared little for these things. If the experiment undertaken by Dr. Hildebrand should happily prove successful, he would do his best to make Annette love him and become his wife; and then they might dispute her fortune as they liked—he should have enough for both. If the experiment were destined to fail, he could not see that the Derinzys would have much to complain of. They would not like their son's marrying a milliner, of course; but as it was quite clear they could not make him marry Annette, it did not materially affect the chief object of their amiable and conscientious scheme. At all events, no pondering over it on George's part, no resolution he could come to, would avail to shorten the period of suspense, to alter the fact that the crisis of his life must shortly be encountered.

George had contented himself with a written communication to Mrs. Derinzy, in which he informed her of Paul's illness, and expressed his conviction that his life depended upon the judicious action of all around him at the present crisis. He did not overestimate Mrs. Derinzy's tenderness towards her son; but he was not prepared, when he went to Paul's rooms on the following day, to find that she had contented herself with inquiring for him, ascertaining that proper arrangements had been made for

his being carefully nursed, and announcing her intention of calling upon the doctor.

Paul was not in a condition to know anything about her proceedings. When he appeared to be conscious, he named only Daisy and George, and these intervals were rare and brief. They alternated with long periods of stupor; and then it would not have been difficult, looking at the sick man's face, to believe that all care and concern of his with life were over for ever.

It was from Daisy George learned that Mrs. Derinzy had been at her son's lodgings, and he allowed her to perceive how much her account of the incident surprised and displeased him.

On arriving at Paul's rooms, George found Daisy sitting quietly beside the bed, the sick man's hand in one of hers, while the fingers of the other, freshly dipped in a fragrant cooling essence, lay lightly on his hot wan forehead, on whose sunken temples pain had set its mark. Her dress, of a soft material incapable of whisking or rustling, her hair smoothly packed away, her ringless hands, her noiseless movements, her composed, steady, alert face, formed a business-like realisation of the ideal of a sick-nurse, which impressed the practised eye of George reassuringly, and at the same time conveyed to him a sense of association which he did not at the moment clearly trace out. When he thought of it afterwards, he put it down to a general resemblance to the women employed at his father's asylum.

Daisy's beauty was not in a style which George Wainwright particularly admired, and the girl had never attracted him much. He had regarded her with pity and consideration at first, when he had feared that Paul was behaving so badly to her. He had regarded her with anger and dislike when he discovered that she was behaving badly to Paul. Both these phases of feeling had passed away now, and Daisy presented herself to George's mind in a different and far more attractive light. In this pale quiet woman there was nothing meretricious, nothing flaunting; not the least touch of vulgarity marred the calm propriety of her demeanour. George felt assured that he was seeing her in a light which promised for the future, should the marriage which

he was forced to hope for, for his friend's sake, be the result of the present complication.

She did not rise when he entered the room, she did not alter her attitude, and there was not a shade of embarrassment in her manner. In reply to his salutation she merely bent her head, and spoke in the low distinct tone, as soothing to an invalid as a whisper is distracting.

"There is not much change," she said; "it is not yet to be expected."

George looked at Paul closely and silently.

"I expected to have found his mother here," he said. "I wrote and told her of his illness."

"But you did not tell her I was here?"

"No," said George in surprise, "I did not think it necessary. I concluded she would see you here, and learn from your own lips, and your presence, the service you are doing Paul."

The sick man moaned slightly, and she dexterously shifted his head upon the pillow before she answered, with a dim dubious smile:

"I believe Mrs. Derinzy is a very well-bred person, quite a woman of the world. She would hardly commit herself to an interview with me."

The girl's proud eyes fixed themselves upon George's face, as she said these few words, without any embarrassment.

"I—I beg your pardon," stammered George; "I ought to have seen Mrs. Derinzy, and prepared her—I mean told her. I shrank from seeing her, from a personal motive, and—and I fear thoughtlessly sacrificed you, in some measure, to this reluctance. I wonder she could go away without seeing her son."

"Do you? I do not. The standard of the actions of a woman of the world may not be comprehensible to you, Mr. Wainwright; but we outsiders, yet on-lookers, understand it well enough."

She glanced at the clock on the mantelshelf, softly withdrew her hand from Paul's, and administered medicine to him, he, seemingly unconscious, moaning heavily the while.

"I shall see Mrs. Derinzy," said George, "and explain to

her. Forgive me, Miss Stafford, pray forgive me, if I express myself awkwardly; I really feel quite astray and at a loss. Things have changed so much since I last talked with you, though that was only yesterday. I shall have to give Mrs. Derinzy not only an explanation of the past and the present, but some notion of what is to be expected in the future. Do not think me impertinent, do not think me unfeeling, but I must, for your own sake, in order to place you in the position it is right, it is due to you, that you should occupy in the estimation of Paul's mother—I must ask you, what do you purpose —what do you intend the future shall mean for you and him?"

Daisy did not reply, until George began to feel impatient of her silence. Her hand again lay on Paul's forehead, her brow was overcast and knitted; she was thinking deeply. At length she said:

"Explain the past as you please, Mr. Wainwright—as Paul has told it to you, I make no doubt—truly, honestly, as a gentleman, as a man of honour should; relate the present as you know it to be—the story of our interview, and of the step I have taken in consequence of it; but of the future, say nothing."

"Nothing!" repeated George, in a tone of remonstrance—"nothing! Will that suffice for her, for you, or for *him?*" He pointed to Paul. "Do you not know the hope, the confidence, to which your presence here, the noble act you have done in coming to him in this terrible extremity, must give rise? Do you not feel that this is decisive, that henceforth every consideration must be abandoned by each of you, for the life which must be lived together?"

It passed swiftly through Daisy's mind that if ever Paul had so pleaded his own cause, with so much conviction, so much force, so much earnestness—if ever he had made her understand the worth of true love, the false *allures* of all beside—she would not have listened to prudence and the narrow suggestions of her worldly wisdom, but would have listened to him. It passed through her mind that this was a strong man, one who would love well and worthily, and whose wife would be honoured

among women, whatever her origin. But she answered him coldly, though his words were utterly persuasive.

"I cannot tell you to answer for the future, Mr. Wainwright. That question cannot be answered until it has been asked by Paul. If he lives, he will ask it; if he dies, Mrs. Derinzy will not require to know anything about me."

"Be it so," said George emphatically. "I shall go there at once, and see you again this evening. Good-bye, Miss Stafford, and God bless you! You are doing the right thing now, at all events."

Again she simply bent her head without speaking, and without turning her eyes from the sick man's face. George left the room with a noiseless step. When he had reached the stair-foot, Daisy covered her face with her hands, and rocked herself upon her chair, in an agony of self-upbraiding.

"If he lives, he will ask me," she murmured in her torturing thoughts. "Yes, he will ask me; and I—I who a little while ago was unfit to be his wife only because of the difference in our rank—what shall I say? Far other my unfitness now—the unfitness of one who has deliberately entertained the project of degradation. Am I, who have chaffered with that vile old man about the terms on which I might be induced to become his mistress, fit to be that trusting boy's wife? Oh mother, mother! this is the result of your calculation, your worldly instructions! Yet no; why should I blame *her?* It is the outcome of my life, of the sort of thing I have seen and known since my childhood. Oh, my God! my God! how foolish, how mad, how wicked I have been!"

Mrs. Derinzy was at home. George was ushered into the back drawing-room, and permitted to indulge himself in solitude with the contemplation of Annette's unoccupied place, her piano, her work-box, and her own especial book of photographs, for some time. He looked at these things with pangs of mingled hope and fear, and their influence was to do away with the embarrassment and uneasiness he had felt on entering the house. After all, what did anything really matter to him which did not concern Annette and his relations with her?

When at length Mrs. Derinzy appeared, George saw that she was alarmed and angry. The former sentiment he was enabled to allay, the latter he was prepared to meet—prepared by courage on his friend's account, and indifference on his own.

"I am happy to tell you," he began at once, "that there is satisfactory progress in Paul's case. He is going on safely. I have little doubt he will soon be out of danger; indeed, the doctor has said plainly that, unless in the case of increase of symptoms, he is confident of the result. You need not be alarmed, Mrs. Derinzy; I assure you the case is favourable."

"I have heard the doctor's opinion of the case, Mr. Wainwright," replied Mrs. Derinzy with cold displeasure, "and I am not unduly alarmed. But I am not unnaturally astonished to find myself excluded from my son in his illness, and by you, the son of one of the oldest and best friends I have in the world. I cannot believe you have any explanation to offer which I can listen to, for your conduct in bringing a—a person whom I cannot meet to take my place at my son's side."

"I am not surprised at your tone, Mrs. Derinzy," replied George, "though I might be pardoned for wondering how you contrive to hold me guilty in the matter of Paul's supposed offence."

"*Supposed* offence, Mr. Wainwright! You adopt the flippant and unbecoming fashion in these matters! I hold it more than a *supposed* offence that I should find a person installed in my son's lodgings, with the knowledge of my son's friend, whose presence renders mine impossible."

"We will let the phrase pass, Mrs. Derinzy, and come to the facts. Are you sure you are really acquainted with the character and position of the lady in question?"

"*Character* and *position* of the *lady* in question!" echoed Mrs. Derinzy, in an accent of spiteful contempt. "I should think there was little doubt about *them*; the facts speak pretty plainly for themselves."

"I assure you, nevertheless, and in spite of appearances, the facts do not speak the truth if they impugn the respectability of Miss Stafford—that is the young lady's name." Mrs. Derinzy

bowed scornfully. "I can give you an ample and trustworthy assurance on this point, for I am acquainted—I was made acquainted by Paul himself—with every particular of their intimacy, until within a few weeks of the event which led to his illness; and the remainder I have learned partly from inquiries elsewhere, but chiefly from Miss Stafford herself. If you will listen to me, Mrs. Derinzy, I will tell you Miss Stafford's history, so far as I know it, and the whole truth respecting her position with regard to your son. And in order that what I have to say may be more convincing, may have more weight with you, let me tell you in the first place that I never spoke a word to Miss Stafford until yesterday, when I went to her in my fear and trouble about Paul, feeling convinced that from *her* only could any real assistance be procured."

"Go on," said Mrs. Derinzy, with sullen resignation. "This is a pleasant hearing for a mother; but it is our fate, I suppose. Tell me what you have to tell."

George obeyed her. He recapitulated all that had passed between himself and Paul on the subject of Daisy, from the time when he had accidentally witnessed their meeting in Kensington Gardens, to the last conversation he had held with Paul before he went to Germany. She listened, still sullen, but with interest, until he told her what was Daisy's position in life; and then she interrupted him with the comment for which he had been prepared.

"A milliner's girl! Truly Paul has a gentlemanly taste! And I am to believe *she* had scruples and *made* difficulties?"

"You are," returned George, gravely; "for it is true. I do not sympathise with your notions of caste, Mrs. Derinzy—I think I have known more bad men and unscrupulous women of gentle than of plebeian blood—but I understand them. Miss Stafford *had* scruples, scruples which Paul failed to vanquish—more shame to him for trying—and she made difficulties which he could not surmount. The last and gravest—that which threw him into the fever in which he is now striving and battling for life—was her refusal, her point-blank, uncompromising, positive refusal, to marry him!"

"To marry him!" exclaimed Mrs. Derinzy, starting up from

her chair in very undignified surprise and anger. "My son propose to *marry* a milliner's girl! I won't believe it!"

"You had no difficulty in believing, on no evidence at all, that he had seduced her," continued George, quietly. "Now I can assume the latter is utterly false; the former is distinctly true. You had better be careful how you act towards this young lady, Mrs. Derinzy, for your son loves her—loves her well enough to have been unworldly, and manly enough to implore her to become his wife, and to be stricken well-nigh to death by her refusal, and the sentence of final separation between them pronounced by her. When your son fell down at his club in the fit from which it seemed at first probable he would never rally, he was struck down by a letter from Miss Stafford, in which she told him he should see her no more."

"What was her reason? Did she not care for him?" asked Mrs. Derinzy, almost in a whisper. She was subdued by the earnestness of George's manner, and some womanly feelings, which, though tepid, still had a place in her worldly scheming nature, were touched.

It was fortunate for the zeal and sincerity of George's advocacy of the cause of the loves of Paul and Daisy, that he was entirely ignorant of the Orpington episode. He had no actual acquaintance with the other motives which had influenced Miss Stafford to reject Paul's proposal of marriage, or the arguments with which she enforced them.

He had a general idea of the ground she had taken up throughout—the ground of their social inequality, the inadequacy of means, and the inevitable grief to which a marriage contracted under those grave disadvantages must come; and he had, on the whole, approved her views, until he had beheld their practical effect. He detailed to Mrs. Derinzy his conviction concerning Miss Stafford's reasons, and stoutly maintained that those reasons were quite consistent with a disinterested attachment to Paul, and with a sound and elevated sense of self-respect. To this view of the subject Paul's mother was entirely indifferent. When it was made plain to her—as it was with irresistible clearness, which not even the obstinacy of an

illiberal woman sitting in judgment on a social inferior could resist—that Miss Stafford's character was unblemished, in the ordinary sense of the phrase, she was obliged to shift her ground; and thenceforth her anxiety was to be convinced that Daisy had really refused to marry her son, and to be assured that she was likely to maintain her resolution. In her solicitude on this point, Mrs. Derinzy was even ready to praise Miss Stafford.

It was most wise of her; it showed an unusual degree of sense and judgment in one so young, and necessarily so ignorant of the world; and really it was impossible to praise such good taste too highly. Mrs. Derinzy could assure Miss Stafford, from her own observation, which she had had many opportunities of confirming, that these unequal marriages never "did." They always resulted in misery to the wife. When the husband outlived the first infatuation, and began to find society and old habits essential to his comfort, society would not have the wife, and she could not fit in with the old habits; and then came impatience and disgust, and all the rest of it. Oh no, such marriages never "did;" and Mrs. Derinzy was delighted to learn—delighted for the girl's own sake; for Mr. Wainwright's narrative had inspired her with quite an interest in this deserving young person—that she had acted with so much judgment and discretion. She really deserved to prosper, and Mrs. Derinzy was quite ready to wish her, after the most disinterested fashion, the utmost amount of good fortune which should not involve her marriage with Paul.

But this was precisely the contingency towards which it was George's object to direct her thoughts. Notwithstanding the ambiguity with which Daisy had spoken, he believed that she would be ready to sacrifice all her pride, and to lay aside all her misgivings, when, the great relief of Paul's being out of immediate danger realised, she should be convinced that his health and his peace must alike depend on her; and when that time should have come, much would depend upon his mother. Happily, George had judgment as well as zeal, and contented himself on this occasion with convincing Mrs. Derinzy, not only that there was no contamination to be dreaded in the presence

of the "young person" under whose watchful care her son was struggling back to life, but that she owed it to Daisy to show, by immediately visiting Paul, and recognising her properly, that she was willing to undo the compromising impression which her refusal to enter Paul's room had produced. Those were two great points to gain in one interview; and when he had gained them, with the addition of having his offer to escort Mrs. Derinzy to Paul's lodgings accepted, he bethought himself, for positively the first time, of the Captain.

Was he at home? was he much alarmed? George asked.

The Captain was not at home; was out of town for a couple of days, in fact; had gone to some races, Mrs. Derinzy did not remember where; she knew so little about things of that kind, all the racing places were pretty much alike to her.

George politely suggested that the Captain's absence was fortunate; he would not have much suspense to suffer; there was every reason to hope all danger would be at an end before his return.

To which Mrs. Derinzy replied with some sharpness that Captain Derinzy was not endowed with susceptible nerves, and that he was not easily alarmed by any illness except his own.

They went out together, and George took leave of Mrs. Derinzy at the door of Paul's lodgings, having ascertained that the doctor had again seen the patient, and pronounced that there was no change to be expected in his condition for some time. He lingered for a moment until Mrs. Derinzy had begun to ascend the stairs under convoy of a maid, and then he turned away, hoping for favourable results from this strange and momentous meeting between Daisy and Paul's mother; and glad on his own account that a rupture between himself and the Derinzys, which his interference had appeared to render imminent, was at least postponed.

There was no characteristic of Daisy's more pronounced than her self-control. When the maid gently opened the door of the sick-room, and whispered the words "Mrs. Derinzy," she understood all that had taken place, and was equal to the emergency. She disengaged her hand from Paul's unconscious

clasp, and rose. Standing in an attitude of simple easy dignity by her son's bedside, Paul's mother saw her first, and felt, though she was not a bright woman in general, an instant conviction that George's story was perfectly true, and that there was nothing about this remarkable-looking "young person," whose handsome face was absolutely strange to her, and yet suggested, as it had done in George's case, an inexpressible association.

Their respective salutations were polite but formal. Daisy spoke first.

"Will you take this chair?" she said, indicating her own. "You will be able to see him better from that side. I am happy to say he is going on favourably."

"Thank you, thank you," returned Mrs. Derinzy, in a fidgety whisper; and she took the proposed place.

Then came a silence, interrupted only by an occasional faint moan from Paul. The presence of Mrs. Derinzy did not deter Daisy from the punctual fulfilment of her self-imposed duties; and as the mother watched her diligent ministering to the invalid, watched it helplessly—for Mrs. Derinzy was a perfectly useless person in a sick-room—she could maintain this reserve no longer, and broke through it by anxious questions, to which the other replied with ready respectful self-possession.

If poor Paul could only have known that, in the first interview between his mother and his love—an interview on which he had often nervously speculated—Daisy had appeared to greater advantage, had looked handsomer, softer, more charming, more graceful, more ladylike than she had ever appeared in her life before! But many days were to pass away before Paul was to know anything of surrounding things or persons; his mind was away in a mysterious region of semi-consciousness, of pain, of unreality. He was assiduously cared for by Daisy and George, by the doctor and the nurse. Even Dr. Wainwright himself superintended the case, and indorsed the mode of treatment of the humbler practitioner. His mother came to see him every day, and a good understanding existed between her and Daisy, though no direct reference to Daisy's relations with Paul had been made.

The Captain had shown a decent solicitude about his son; but it is to be feared he rather enjoyed the state of affairs than otherwise as soon as positive danger to Paul's life was no longer to be apprehended. It implied so much of the freedom he loved, no surveillance, no domestic restraints, no regular hours; it was a delicious renewal of the liberty of his bachelor days.

There is no need to dwell farther on this portion of the story. After many weeks Paul was pronounced convalescent; and then, by the advice of Dr. Wainwright, whose interest had been gradually awakened in the case, and who had come to like Paul, Daisy abandoned her post. It was determined that the invalid should travel for awhile, and arranged that George should accompany him. Dr. Wainwright undertook to induce him to acquiesce, and to reconcile him to the absence of Daisy.

He was too weak to resist, he felt an inner consciousness of his unfitness to bear emotion, which rendered him passively obedient, and he was too happy to be exacting or rebellious. He trusted the future; he felt, in a vague way, that things would go well with him. And on the day fixed for the departure of himself and George on their excursion, he received a little note from Daisy, which sent him on his way rejoicing. It contained only these words:

"DEAREST PAUL,—George would have brought me to say good-bye to you; but I could not bear it. You know I hate showing my feelings to anyone but you, and we could not have been alone. Come home soon—no, don't; stay away until you are quite well and strong; and don't forget, for one minute of all the time, "DAISY."

"I think you are a humbug," said George Wainwright to Paul as they landed at Calais, and Paul declared his inclination to have everything that could be procured to eat immediately; "you don't look a bit like a sick man."

"I'm sure I don't feel like one," returned Paul; "and it's great nonsense your father sending me away like this. But I am not going to complain or rebel; I mean implicitly to obey him——"

"And Daisy," interrupted George.

"And Daisy, of course."

The two young men enjoyed their tour, Paul very much more than George, as was natural. Paul's affairs were promising, though he did not see his way very clearly to the fulfilment of the promise. But he was full of hope and the gladsome spirits of returning health. There was as yet no rift in the cloud which overhung George's prospects, and he wearied sometimes of the monotony of anxiety and deferred hope.

Dr. Wainwright communicated punctually to his son such information as reached him from Mayence. He had not expected regular intelligence from Dr. Hildebrand, and had told George he must not expect any such concessions from the scientific old oddity, who had already done him exceptional grace. A formal report from Mrs. Stothard of the general health and spirits of Annette reached the Doctor at the appointed periods, but conveyed little real information. Such as they were, George hailed the arrival of these documents with eagerness, and Paul had the grace to assume a deeper interest in them than he really felt.

"By-the-bye," he said to George one evening, as they were resting after a day of laborious mountain-walking, "I don't think I ever told you about Mrs. Stothard, did I?"

"You never told me anything particular about Mrs. Stothard," replied George. "What is it?"

"Why, she's Daisy's mother!"

"Daisy's mother!" repeated George in astonishment. "Now I know what the likeness was that struck me; of course, it was just the steady business-like look I have seen Mrs. Stothard give at Annette."

Before the companions had started on the expedition arranged for the following day, the English mail arrived. George got his letters at the inn-door. One was from his father. He glanced over it, and ran up to Paul's room, breathless, and with a very pale face.

"Paul," he said, "there's a letter from my father. Such wonderful news! He says he will not tell me any particulars till we meet; but Dr. Hildebrand is sending Annette home at

once, and—and she is perfectly well! Hildebrand says he has never had a more complete, a more thorough success."

Paul shook his friend's hand warmly, and eagerly congratulated him, adding with great promptitude:

"I'm all right also, you know; and so, old fellow, we'll start for England to-night."

CHAPTER XXXII.

MADAME VAUGHAN.

CAPTAIN and Mrs. Derinzy had not yet returned to the uncongenial seclusion of Beachborough. The Captain, who, since he had been coerced, by Dr. Wainwright's strong representation that he might find it uncomfortable if he refused, into permitting the experiment proposed by Hildebrand, had been unusually tractable, was not, it will be readily believed, eager to leave London. As things were looking at present—and he was aware they had assumed a very ugly complexion—there was a decidedly unpleasant uncertainty about the prospect of his getting back again to his favourite resorts, which quickened his appreciation of the wisdom of remaining in London as long as he could contrive to do so, and getting as much pleasure as possible out of the time.

Mrs. Derinzy considered that it was proper to await Annette's return in town; there would be so many things to settle when she came back; and if they really were to be finally defeated in all their plans, if Paul's folly and obstinacy were to defeat the marriage project, and Annette's restoration to health render her attainment of her majority a real acquisition of power, not a mere form, they would be better in London than elsewhere. Annette might or might not settle an annuity worth having upon them, if the power to manage her own

affairs should accrue to her; but if they did not voluntarily abandon it, she could hardly do otherwise than invite them to continue to share her home. The accounts which Mrs. Derinzy had received from Mrs. Stothard were facsimiles of those which had been forwarded to Dr. Wainwright, and in their contents Mrs. Derinzy discerned defeat.

She was not a wicked, she was only a weak and selfish, woman; and though that combination has worked as much woe as the more positive evil, it is only fair to credit her with the palliation. No one could have been more genuinely shocked than Mrs. Derinzy, if she had been plainly told that she *feared* Annette's recovery, that she *hoped* for her continued infirmity of mind. She would have repudiated such an idea with vehemence and sincerity; but she would have been infinitely puzzled to define the distinction between the feeling of which she firmly believed herself incapable, and the feeling which she did, beyond dispute, entertain. If Annette could have been perfectly sane, but at the same time utterly passive in her hands; if she could have been thoroughly competent to manage her own affairs; and at the same time quite incapable of ever desiring to understand or interfere with them, that would have been charming. Mrs. Derinzy thought it unreasonable that so easy a state of things should not be immediately called into existence. At this particular period of her life she regarded herself as an ill-used individual, whose husband, son, and niece, separately and in combination, were in act to "worry her to death."

It might have been all so comfortable and safe and prosperous—so nice for them, so well for Paul, so pleasant for poor dear Annette herself—if it had not been for that odious Miss Stafford in the first place, and afterwards for that meddling German doctor. But Paul was most to blame; indeed, if the marriage had come off, it would have been for every reason best that Annette should be restored to perfect sanity; this "pother" was his doing chiefly. She was very angry with Paul —angry with him, that is to say, when he had recovered, when the danger that the sun of his life might go down upon her wrath was at an end, when he was abroad gaining health and

strength, enjoying himself, and carrying on a voluminous correspondence with Daisy; while she had to lament the discomfiture of her designs, and put up with the Captain's discontent and temper.

On the whole, Captain and Mrs. Derinzy were very ill at ease, feeling like a pair of discomfited conspirators, which indeed they were, and experiencing a humiliating sense of having had the guidance of affairs taken out of their hands suddenly, noiselessly, dexterously, and irresistibly. Thenceforward the Captain would complain of "that d——d authoritative way of Wainwright's," and Mrs. Derinzy admit that she "had never quite understood the Doctor;" and they were drawn nearer together by the discomfiture than they had been by any success or vexation for many years.

Annette was coming home—the day and hour of her arrival were fixed; and Mrs. Derinzy had heard from her son that he intended to return immediately. Something must be settled now. The explanation, which must inevitably be encountered, had better be brought on at once. It had occurred to Mrs. Derinzy as a cunning device of immense merit to call on Daisy, and, availing herself of Paul's absence, address herself to the girl's disinterestedness and generosity, and secure her promise that she would refuse Paul should he again ask her to marry him. No consideration that one refusal on Daisy's part had already almost cost Paul his life interfered with his mother's sage resolution. "He will have gotten over it," she believed, because she desired to believe so.

In pursuance of this brilliant idea, Mrs. Derinzy called on Madame Clarisse, and condescendingly inquired if she could see Miss Stafford.

But she could not. Madame Clarisse benignly explained that Miss Stafford, who had not been quite strong lately, had applied for a short vacation, and gone to the country, to the farmhouse of a relative. Madame Clarisse could give Mrs. Derinzy the address; but that lady, who did not calculate on an epistolary victory, declined, and went away, leaving the astute *modiste* to wonder what her business with Miss Stafford might be, and to make a very "near" guess at the facts.

There was no help for it; Paul must come back, and she must fight the battle single-handed. She wished that meddling George Wainwright would have remained away a little longer. He had not behaved so badly as she had been inclined to believe at first in that matter of Paul's illness and Miss Stafford, but they could manage their affairs quite as well without him.

On the morning of the day fixed for Annette's return, Dr. Wainwright visited Mrs. Derinzy, and gave her sundry injunctions as to composure, and the avoidance of fuss and excitement, in her reception of the convalescent. The effect of the lesson was, as the Doctor intended it should be, to rouse Mrs. Derinzy up into the exhibition of some kindness and warmth of feeling towards the girl, who had for a long period known nothing more than an indifferent imitation of a home. The effort to seem kind and affectionate bore its fruits in inspiring Mrs. Derinzy with more of the feelings she strove to imitate than she had ever yet experienced, and her heart fairly melted into true kindliness. She forgot her interested scheming, she did not even remember Annette's money, when she saw Annette herself, the picture of health, and of natural girlish happiness.

The most convincing proof, to Mrs. Derinzy's mind, that the restoration of Annette was real and complete, was furnished by the alteration in Mrs. Stothard's manner. As soon as she could see her alone, Mrs. Derinzy had asked Mrs. Stothard her opinion of the case. The answer was quickly and decisively given:

"The German doctor is the queerest man I ever saw, and I'm far from sure that he is not mad himself; but he has cured Miss Annette, and sent her home as sane as you and I."

Every word, look, and gesture of Mrs. Stothard's confirmed this statement. There was no longer any of the steady unrelaxing vigilance, the set watch upon the girl, the calmly authoritative or soothingly coaxing tone which she had been used to maintain. There was no longer the half-servant demeanour, the personal waiting on Annette, which had puzzled more than one of the very few persons who had ever had an opportunity of speculating on Mrs. Stothard's real position in the Derinzy household.

Every trace of this manner had vanished. Mrs. Stothard

was Annette's companion, and nothing more. She formally, though without explanation, assumed this position, whose functions she fulfilled as perfectly as she had fulfilled the more painful and onerous duties of her former station. It is probable that she and Dr. Wainwright had come to an understanding, but if so, no third party was the wiser.

Dr. Wainwright, who was perfectly satisfied of Annette's convalescence, was a little curious as to how she would receive him, and on his part assumed a friendly, almost paternal, manner in which there was no trace of his old relation of physician. But Annette, seizing an opportunity of speaking to him alone, referred openly to her former malady, and in the warmest terms thanked him for all his solicitude and care. Her ready frankness conveyed to the Doctor the last best assurance of her complete recovery, and he met her expressions of gratitude with prompt kindness. He left his former patient on this first occasion of their meeting with an earnest wish for the success of his son in the suit he had no doubt George would immediately urge. "If the case had been any other," Dr. Wainwright thought, as he made his way out of the house without seeing either Captain or Mrs. Derinzy, "I might not feel so disinterestedly pleased that another has succeeded where I have for some time despaired of success, but I cannot grudge Hildebrand his triumph, when it is to secure George's happiness, as I do believe it will, for this girl is a fine creature."

Dr. Wainwright had stipulated, in writing to his son, that he was not to see Annette until after he had had an opportunity of forming his own judgment upon her state ; and he had accepted it as understood, that if the cure were not complete, George would not ask Annette to marry him. When he had made his visit to her, with the results already recorded, he wrote to George, who had arrived in England that morning, in the following terms, characteristic of the writer, and eminently satisfactory to the recipient :

"MY DEAR GEORGE,—I have seen Miss Derinzy. Hildebrand has kept his promise, and beaten me, to our mutual satisfaction. Go and visit her as soon as you please, and you have *my*

consent, if you can gain the lady's, to turn my patient into my daughter, as soon as you like.—Yours ever, "G. W."

"That's glorious!" said Paul, who had gone home with George on their arrival. "I am as glad for her sake as for yours, and for yours as for hers, and I can't say fairer than *that*, can I? Annette is a dear girl, and I am quite sure she likes you. I know something of the symptoms, George, my boy! The governor and my mother will be furious, of course, and I should not wonder if they declare your father and you are in a conspiracy against them for your own purposes. However, if they proclaim such a plot as that, they must include me in it. I say, George, suppose Annette and I did a bit of the old romance business, and solemnly repudiated each other; 'unalterably never yours,' and that kind of thing, you know?"

George smiled but dimly, and answered his friend's pleasantries only vaguely. He had not the assurance and certainty with which Paul accredited him. In the great change which had befallen Annette, in the new hope and happiness of her life, he might not have the large share of which his friend believed him confident. He had a true gentleman's diffidence towards the woman he loved, and no assurance at second hand could render him secure. He had awaited his father's message with keen anxiety, and now that it had come, and was so full of goodness, he was feverishly impatient to learn his fate. The time had come, the time which had seemed so hopelessly far off had drawn near with wonderful celerity, and he was to know his destiny—he was to

> put it to the touch,
> To win or lose it all.

He read his father's letter again—"as soon as you like." I will see her to-day, I will ask her to-day," he said to himself. "There is no risk to her, or my father would not have said this." Then he said to Paul:

"You will come with me, won't you?"

"Of a surety that will I," answered Paul; "and I will tackle the governor and my mother—you may be sure there's plenty

ready for me on the score of Daisy—and leave you to welcome Annette home *en tête-à-tête.*"

Just as the friends were leaving the house, a servant came in search of George, and stopped him. George asked him with pardonable impatience what he wanted, and the man replied, that Madame Vaughan had been very ill during the night, and the nurse had sent to Mr. George to tell him that she desired to see him at his earliest convenience. George asked the man several particulars about his poor friend, and expressed his readiness to go and see Madame Vaughan immediately; but this act of self-denial was not exacted of him.

"She's asleep just now, sir," said the man, "and the nurse would not like to disturb her, she has had such a bad night; but I was not to let you leave the house without telling you, sir."

* * * * *

Many a less brave man has gone to a battle with a stouter heart than that with which George Wainwright entered the Derinzy mansion, and was ushered into the room where Annette, her aunt, and Mrs. Stothard were assembled. The young lady was seated at the piano; the sounds of music had reached the visitors as they ascended the stairs; and on their entrance she rose. Paul went into the room first. She received her cousin with a smile, and his friend, who followed him closely, with a deep, burning, lasting blush, perceived by Paul, George, and one other. This observer was Mrs. Stothard, who, having performed her share in the general civilities, withdrew, with a meaning and well-satisfied smile in her clear gray eyes, and on her calm, determined, authoritative mouth.

"So," she thought, "I was right. I suspected before we left town, and now I know. Well, so long as my Fanny comes by her fair share, I am content; and she shall come by it, or I will know why. Old Hildebrand is a very clever man, and so is Dr. Wainwright, and they have both done wonders in this case, but I believe Mr. George is the true healer. I hold to the old proverb, 'Love is the best physician.'"

* * * * *

When Paul Derinzy and his mother returned to the small

drawing-room, whence George Wainwright's friend and accomplice had drawn Mrs. Derinzy within a very few minutes of their arrival, they found Annette in tears, and her companion in a state of quite unmistakable excitement and agitation. The first glance which Mrs. Derinzy directed towards the girl enlightened her as to the cause of the emotion she was evincing; and by that ray of illumination was dispersed the little feeble hope of ever carrying her laboriously-constructed design into effect, which had survived her conversation with Paul. It was surprising—or rather it would have been surprising to anyone who did not know how obstinate woman can be in declining to acknowledge a defeat—that her favourite delusion could have survived the brief but momentous and decisive conversation she had just had with her son; who had positively declared his intention of marrying Daisy, if by any persuasion she could be induced to accept him, and as distinctly his determination *not* to marry Annette, if she should prove as willing as her cousin was justly convinced she was unwilling to have him. She had controlled her temper wonderfully; her feelings were a little softened by the first sight of Paul restored to health; and she re-entered the drawing-room determined to believe that all was not yet completely lost. The sweet delusion fled at the sight of the faces of the lovers.

"What does this mean?" demanded the angry lady.

George started up from his place—quite unconventionally close to Annette—and was beginning to speak, when Paul interrupted him.

"It means capital news, mother.—George, I wish you joy.—It means the best thing possible for all parties. The best fellow in England is going to marry the nicest girl in Europe.—Isn't it so, George?—Isn't it so, Annette?—Come, mother, you must not look glum over it; it's on my account you do so, I know; but I declare before witnesses my conviction that Annette would not have married me, and that nothing in the world should have induced me to marry Annette."

"Though I am the nicest girl in Europe, eh, Paul?" asked Annette, looking at him through her joyful tears, with a shy archness which was an entirely new expression in her face.

"Yes," said Paul, bestowing upon his cousin, for the first time in his life, an unceremonious hug; "but then I'm not the best fellow in England."

"Am I to understand, Mr. Wainwright," began Mrs. Derinzy with an assumption of dignity much impaired by the reality of her anger, "that you and Miss Derinzy are engaged?"

"Yes, madam," said George, and he took Annette's hand in his. "Miss Derinzy has promised to become my wife, and she and I both hope for your sanction, and that of Captain Derinzy."

"It will be entirely a matter for the lawyers, sir. Until Miss Derinzy is of age, no arrangement of the kind can possibly receive our sanction, for reasons with which I have no doubt you are well acquainted. After that time, it will be a question for the lawyers whether Miss Derinzy can contract any engagements."

It was a cruel speech, and Paul felt equally hurt and ashamed of it. George's face glowed with anger; but Annette did not seem in the least hurt by it. She smiled very sweetly, laid her hand caressingly on Mrs. Derinzy's shoulder, and said:

"Dear aunt, I hope the lawyers will not be hard on me. I shall only ask them to do two things for me—to let me marry George, and to let me give half my money to you and Paul."

"If she is in earnest," thought Mrs. Derinzy, seizing on the idea with lightning rapidity, "this is unlooked-for compensation for the defeat of our plans, and I trust the lawyers will let her have her own way; but if I were one or all of them, I should regard the notion for one thing as strong proof that she is not cured, and for another that she has bitten George and made him as mad as herself."

But Mrs. Derinzy was very careful to conceal the effect which Annette's generous unguarded proposition had produced upon her. She answered her gently and without effusion, that this was a matter of which women could not judge, and in which she would not interfere. It must be referred in the first place to Captain Derinzy. She then took a cold and formal leave of George Wainwright, and left the room.

George, Paul, and Annette looked at one another rather blankly for the space of a few moments, and then Paul said:

"Never mind; it's all right. All that about the money is bosh, you know, George. I'm not going to rob Annette because my friend is going to marry her. But the discussion will keep, and we are mutually a nuisance just now."

He was out of the room in a moment; the next they heard him bang the front door cheerfully, and go off whistling down the street.

It is only with one portion of the conversation which ensued on Paul's departure, which the reader can reproduce according to his taste or his memory, that this story has any concern. Annette spoke of her position, in every aspect with perfect unreserve to her future husband, and she told him, without anger or vindictiveness, but with a clear and sensible conviction, that, if the bribe of half her fortune did not suffice to buy him off, she was sure they would experience active enmity from the Captain, who would resist to the utmost the deprivation of his power as her legal heir over her property, and would leave no effort unmade to dispute her restoration to sanity. She proposed that George should inform his father of their engagement and of her apprehensions, and then that he should call on Messrs. Hamber and Clarke, her father's former solicitors, and ascertain precisely the amount and conditions of her property; and armed with these sanctions, that he should demand an interview with Captain Derinzy, who was just then fortunately absent from home.

Annette's maid had twice presented herself with an intimation that it was time Miss Derinzy should dress for dinner, before the interview of the lovers came to an end. But at length George took leave of his affianced bride, and turned his steps at once towards the Albany.

Dr. Wainwright listened to his son's story with grave interest and not a little amusement.

"They will take the money," he said, when George had concluded his recital of the morning's events. "It is too much, too liberal; but I suppose she must have her own way. You won't

have any trouble, I am pretty sure. Derinzy is a fool in some respects, but in others he is only a knave, and he won't venture to try to retain his power by disputing Miss Derinzy's sanity, in the teeth of my testimony; he will keep the substance, depend on it, and not grasp at the shadow. And so Miss Derinzy's solicitors are Hamber and Clarke? It's an odd coincidence," added the Doctor musingly.

"Why?"

"Because they are concerned in another case in which we are both interested. Your poor friend Madame Vaughan's case, George. It is through them her annuity is paid, and I must say they are capital men of business, so far as punctual payments and keeping a secret faithfully are concerned."

"That *is* an odd coincidence indeed. You know them, then? Would you have any objection to call on them with me?"

"Not the least. I can make time to-morrow morning. They have always been very civil to me."

On the following day, the two gentlemen took their way to the offices of Messrs. Hamber and Clarke, and were without delay admitted to an audience with the head of the firm, a polite, impressive gentleman, who heard George's statement of his business in silence, which he broke only to repudiate with decided eagerness the association of the firm in any way with Captain Derinzy. They had acted for Miss Derinzy's father in a confidential capacity for many years, but their trust, with one exception specially provided for during Mr. Derinzy's lifetime, had passed into other hands on Captain Derinzy's assuming the guardianship of his orphan niece.

This intelligence was grateful rather than otherwise to Paul. If Messrs. Hamber and Clarke had been Captain Derinzy's solicitors, they would probably have declined to afford him any information unsanctioned by their client; but as things were Mr. Hamber furnished him with full particulars. Acting on Annette's instructions, George informed her father's old friend of all they had to wish and to fear, and told him what were Annette's designs, supposing she secured the full personal

control of her property. He was prepared to find these designs treated as extravagant by a man of business, but also prepared to disregard his opinion.

"Derinzy would never venture to fight it out," said the lawyer; "though if he did, he must be beaten on your father's evidence. There's no question Miss Derinzy could make far better terms. I understand you, sir," turning to Dr. Wainwright, "that you are entirely confident of the cure?"

"Certainly," replied the Doctor; "there's no doubt about it. Nothing can be clearer."

"Then that's conclusive," said Mr. Hamber, "unless, indeed —to be sure, there's the hereditary taint."

"Hereditary taint! What do you mean?" asked Dr. Wainwright. "None of the Derinzy family that I could hear of were ever mad; I investigated that point closely, when Miss Derinzy first became my patient."

Mr. Hamber looked vexed with himself, as a man does who has said too much, or at all events has said more than he intended. He hesitated, kept a brief silence, and then, taking a resolution, spoke:

"I think, Dr. Wainwright, you will give us credit for discretion, so far as you know us. I am of opinion that discretion, like every quality, may be carried too far. Up to the present it has been our duty to be silent concerning one particular of our relations with the late Mrs. Derinzy, but at this point it seems to me our duty to speak—confidentially, you will understand—to you and your son. Your object and our wish is to benefit Miss Derinzy, and I think it would not be fair to her, and therefore, of course, contrary to her father's wishes, that you should remain ignorant of a fact, the knowledge of which may modify your proceedings, and alter your judgment."

"Certainly, you are quite right. We must be perfectly informed to act efficiently," said Dr. Wainwright, who had felt much compassion for the miserable anxiety displayed in George's countenance during the long-winded exordium of Mr. Hamber.

"Then, sir," said the lawyer solemnly, "it is my painful

duty to tell you that Miss Derinzy's mother is living and is mad."

"Good God, how horrible!" exclaimed George.

"Horrible indeed. She was a Frenchwoman, and she became deranged from a shock, after her child's birth. I suppose the treatment of the insane was not wise in those days, for she never recovered; and her husband's horror of the possible effect on the child made him morbidly anxious to put her out of sight and recollection. It was a bad business, not intentionally cruel, I am sure, but ill-judged, and she had much to suffer, I've no doubt. A sum was invested and placed in our keeping, and the payments are made by us. The poor woman has been very quiet and happy for a long time, for which I have frequently had your word, Dr. Wainwright."

"My word!" exclaimed the Doctor, on whom a light was breaking.

"Yes, indeed. I am speaking of Madame Vaughan."

"Of Madame Vaughan!" cried George, in a choking voice, quite unmanned by this revelation. "Ah, father, then it is no delusion, after all; the child—the child she is always pining for is my Annette."

"Even so," said Dr. Wainwright, and laid his hand on his son's arm impressively. "I don't wonder this discovery should affect you painfully. But cheer up, George. Remember, this pining for her child is the only trace of insanity your poor friend has exhibited for years—has ever exhibited, indeed, within my knowledge. Now we know this supposed delusion is no delusion at all, but a truth; and I don't entertain the smallest doubt that Annette's mother is as sane as you or I."

CHAPTER THE LAST.

CERTAINTY.

MR. HAMBER'S opinion was justified by the result—the Derinzys did not fight. The character of the Captain has been sketched in these pages to very little purpose, if the reader does not guess with the utmost readiness that he was entirely indifferent concerning his son's future, when he had been once and for all thoroughly informed what was the best he had to expect and calculate upon for his own. In the interview which had taken place between the Captain and Dr. Wainwright, prior to Annette's journey to Germany, he had tried to bully the Doctor, with such utter failure that he bore a salutary remembrance of his defeat with him to the family council, convened a few days after the visit made by Dr. Wainwright and his son to Messrs. Hamber and Clarke's office.

The subjects to be discussed on this solemn and set occasion were two—the intended marriage of George Wainwright and Annette Derinzy, and the "state of things"—which fine distinction in terms had been cleverly invented by Mrs. Derinzy—between Paul and Daisy. The combination had come about on this wise :

When Paul left his mother's house, on the occasion when he had so gallantly helped his friend and his cousin out of their little difficulty, he went straight away to the village in Berkshire where Daisy was staying with an old friend ; and having fully explained to her the present position of affairs, entreated her to permit him to announce to his parents that their marriage was immovably fixed. Paul found Daisy looking very handsome, very elegant, and very sweet—if there had existed a corner of his heart yet uninvaded by her power, she must inevitably have taken possession of it ; but she was changed, changed in manner, and, as he found when he came to talk to her, in mind too.

The self-deception in which the girl had indulged; the false estimates she had made of life, its responsibilities, and its real prizes; the sudden shock of the discovery of her great error, which had come to her with her first glance at Paul's fever-stricken face; the awful danger from which she had been snatched, a danger confronted with hardihood it filled her with shame to remember—these things had wrought the change. Paul did not question or speculate upon its origin, but he felt its presence with a keen sweet conviction, priceless to him. Daisy had learned to love him; she would not deliberate now with cold pride upon the pros and cons of a life to be shared with him; she would not speculate upon the chances of his repenting, and the certainty of his family being ashamed of her, as she had done, making him feel that the canker of worldliness had fastened upon her beautiful youth. Paul was a careless fellow enough, and as free from anything like heroism or enthusiasm as the most practical-minded of his friends could possibly have desired; but he was young, honest, and very much in love; and it was an unspeakable relief to him to find that the genuine fervour of his feelings and his hopes was no longer to be checked by caution or disdain on Daisy's part. She was not gushing, and she was not silly—no combination of fate could have made Fanny Stothard either—but she was "pure womanly," and the sweet undefined humility in her manner—of whose origin Paul must remain for ever ignorant—set the last touch of captivation to her charms.

"You did not see my mother, then, to explain anything to her?" said Daisy, when Paul had told her the story of events, but with one important omission; he had said nothing of Annette's generous proposition.

"No," replied Paul; "I thought it better to wait until I had seen you. But I shall go to her immediately, and ask her consent."

"Poor mother!" said Daisy, with a sigh, "she is of a gloomy designing turn of mind; and I am sure she always had some scheme in her head about Miss Derinzy, and never intended she should marry you. But that her daughter should marry Miss Derinzy's cousin——"

"And have half Miss Derinzy's fortune, if Annette gets her own way about it!" interrupted Paul.

"Half Miss Derinzy's! What are you talking about?" asked Daisy, in utter surprise.

"There now, my darling, you must forgive me. I could not resist the temptation of seeing and hearing from yourself that you were not afraid to marry a poor fellow like me—not afraid to go in for squalls with a pilot whom you care enough for, not to mind very much whether he is particularly calculated to weather the storm. It is so awfully jolly to convict you of reckless imprudence! I really could not resist it; and so I didn't tell you. We shan't be poor, and we shan't get into storms—not *that* kind, anyhow. Annette and George are going to share with us, Daisy. They have got an unreasonable kind of notion, which they regard as sound sense, that I ought to be largely compensated for the loss of a young lady whom no earthly inducement would have persuaded me to marry, and the deprivation of a fortune to which I had not the smallest claim. Very well, I'm agreeable. Of course taking half is all nonsense; but if they will make us comfortable, and square it with the governor, I don't see why—do you, darling?"

"No, I don't," returned Daisy promptly. "If I wanted to flatter you, Paul, and get credit of high-flying sentiment, I should talk nonsense about love, and poverty, and independence; but I *don't*, not only because it would not exactly fit in with my former line of opinion, but because I don't mean to be anything but sensible and *true*. Your friend and your cousin wish to insure your happiness, and they very wisely think the first step is to secure you from poverty. I can give you everything else you want, but I can't give you money. Very well, then, I am glad that they can, and will."

Paul returned to town on the following day, and had an interview with Mrs. Stothard. It was satisfactory; but she made two stipulations. One, that the fact of Fanny's being her daughter should be communicated to Captain and Mrs. Derinzy by herself; and the other, that she should not be expected to reside with Daisy. Paul had no objection to an unhesitating acquiescence in the latter request. He did not wish for any

third person in his home, and he had always been a little afraid of Mrs. Stothard—a sentiment which, he felt convinced, would increase when that lady should have become his mother-in-law. He did not dare to ask what she intended to do; but he felt a secret curiosity as to whether she and his mother, whose relations had puzzled him for so long, would continue to reside together. On this occasion Paul did not see Mrs. Derinzy.

His next visit was to George Wainwright, who told him of the discovery which had been made relative to Madame Vaughan, of which Annette was still in ignorance.

"Our best plan—yours as well as mine—is to leave everything to my father. He is a wonderful man, Paul. I never half appreciated him till now—not his kind-heartedness, and his energy, and his sympathy, you know. If he were a lover in difficulties himself, he could not be more anxious about all this affair, and I don't only mean for me. You have no idea how much impressed he was by Daisy when you were ill, and how he liked and addressed her. Of course it is a delicate business to tell Madame Vaughan that he has found out his mistake, and that her delusion is no delusion; and equally, of course, it is subjecting Annette to a severe test, in her newly-recovered state, to tell her that her mother is living; and their meeting will be a tremendous trial for both. But then, as my father said, if it turns out well—and he has not the least fear of it—it will be just the most satisfactory test which could possibly have been applied—one, indeed, beyond anything we ever could have looked for turning up."

"What has your father done?" asked Paul, pardonably anxious to come to the discussion of his own share in the situation.

"He has seen Mrs. Derinzy, and arranged a solemn meeting of all parties concerned for Thursday next, when your father will have to make up his mind whether he means to fight or to give in; and in the face of the fact that Annette's mother is living and perfectly sane, and that Annette is close upon her majority, I do not think there will be much difficulty; and when he has fought my battle, the Doctor intends to fight yours; and neither will there be much trouble there, I prophesy, for Annette

will not settle money on you unless you marry Daisy. I have told our ambassador that you are willing. Did I go beyond the truth, Paul?"

Too much affected to speak, the younger man turned abruptly away.

It has been already said that the Derinzys did not fight. The family council was a trying ordeal for everyone concerned; but the consummate tact, the masterly *savoir faire* of Dr. Wainwright, carried all parties, himself included, through the difficulties of the position. Even Captain Derinzy was not visited by a suspicion of his motives: even that gentleman, whose naturally base proclivities might easily on this occasion have been quickened by the sympathetic consideration that he had ineffectually endeavoured to do that very thing, did not venture to suggest that this was a plan of the Doctor's to marry his son to an heiress.

Annette had been on terms of distant civility only with Mrs. Derinzy since the *éclaircissement*, and no allusion to what had passed had been made between her and Mrs. Stothard. She was sitting alone, and in a state of considerable trepidation, listening to the reverberation of the men's voices in the library, when Mrs. Stothard entered the room, and addressed her with a very unusual appearance of agitation. In her hand she held a letter: it was from her daughter.

"My dear," she said, "I have something to tell you, and I mean to tell it without any roundabout ways or preparation, which I have always considered nonsense. You have made a noble offer, I understand, to Paul Derinzy, in order to enable him to marry the girl he loves. But you have no notion who that girl is."

"Yes, I have; she is a Miss Stafford—a very charming person, and most devotedly attached to Paul. She nursed him through that dreadful fever; and my aunt has had to acknowledge that there is nothing against her, except that she is not rich—not quite what people call a lady. She has been forewoman to some great milliner, I believe—like dear beautiful Kate Nickleby, you know," said Annette, to whom the matchless

creations of the Master were the friends, the associations, the illustrations of her every-day life.

"Yes, yes, you know so much; I am aware of that," said Mrs. Stothard. "But what you do not know, Annette, is, that this Miss Stafford is my daughter, Fanny Stothard, and that by the nobleness of your conduct to her you have won my best affection, have utterly disarmed me—not towards you, but towards others—and turned the enemy of the Derinzys into the friend of all whom you care for."

"The enemy of the Derinzys!" repeated Annette, who had been looking at her in blank amazement, hardly taking in the meaning of what she said.

"Yes, their enemy; their enemy for a reason which I need not explain, which, indeed, I could not to you, but a well-founded one, believe me. I knew their designs about you, and held them in check all along, and played a counter-game of my own, while they were playing their unsuccessful cards; and had the end come as I expected, I should have defeated and exposed them, and had my revenge; but another end has come, a widely different end, thank God, and your noble conduct to my child—your upholding of the obscure, unknown, friendless girl, who had no claim upon you except the claim so seldom allowed, of womanly sympathy, and your kindly touch of nature—has softened my heart and changed my purpose, and henceforth I shall hold you and her equally dear."

"Oh, Mrs. Stothard, how could you live without her?—how could you bear to part with her?"

"Because we were poor; we could not afford the luxury of a common home. You have no practical experience of such things, my dear; but they exist; and they warp one's nature sometimes. I believe my nature was warped, Annette; but you—your patience, your sweetness, your nobleness and generosity—have set it right again."

"And your daughter Fanny is really, really Paul's Daisy?" Annette said, with a dreamy and surprised delight in her eyes and her voice. "How delighted Paul will be to hear it, and my George!"

"They know it already," said Mrs. Stothard; "but I begged that I might be allowed to tell you myself."

"When is she coming? Have you told her to come at once? May I go and fetch her? Where is she? Never mind Aunt Derinzy, Mrs. Stothard; she will not find fault now; and, besides, the house is *mine*."

To do Annette justice, she rarely showed any remembrance of her heiress-ship—never, unless the rights or the interests of another were in question.

"She will be in London to-morrow; and if all goes right, she will come to see you."

"No, no, that will not do!" cried Annette impatiently. "She shall not come to see me; she shall come to live here, to be like myself in everything, and she shall be my sister. I never had a mother or a sister, you know," continued the girl pleadingly; "and I have *very*, very seldom in all my life been able to do anything exactly as I wished. You won't oppose me in that; I know you will let me have my own way, won't you? My George is Paul's dearest friend, you know; and Paul's Daisy shall be mine, though she is so handsome and so clever. I *feel* she will love me, and—and—we shall never part until I go to George's home, and she goes to Paul's; and we shall be married on the same day."

When George Wainwright, with the full sanction of the subjugated Captain, and congratulations as suave as she could bring herself to make them on the part of Mrs. Derinzy, sought Annette's presence, in order to tell her to what an entirely satisfactory conclusion the family council had come, he found Annette on her knees beside Mrs. Stothard, her smiling face upturned to the features which had lost all their sternness, and the grave, ordinarily inflexible woman weeping tears of gladness.

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Dr. Wainwright found himself about this time in an unusual position; and though he liked it very much, and was conscious that he fulfilled all the duties which it entailed to perfection, he had no desire to prolong its responsibilities. The docility of the Derinzys was not to be surpassed; and the grave elderly physician became the referee of two pairs of lovers, who looked

to him as a beneficent genius, whose judgment was equal to his generosity. This was pleasant, but it cost trouble and time; and though the Doctor did not grudge the one, of the other he had none to spare, and he was not sorry when the time fixed for the double wedding arrived. Annette had had her way and her wish; Daisy had come to remain in the house with her; and even the sensitive girl, to whom congenial companionship and love of her kind were so strange, could not fail to be content with the affection she inspired in the so-differently-reared young woman, for whom her good breeding, her refined, her perfect ladyism, had an indescribable and attaching charm.

The Doctor's cases were near their dispersion. All the arrangements had been made, including one whereby Captain and Mrs. Derinzy were to be comfortably bestowed in foreign parts. Annette had not yet learned the truth about her mother, with Madame Vaughan's concurrence. Dr. Wainwright had made the strange communication to her; and he received the proof of the correctness of his belief in her perfect sanity in the reasonable motherly solicitude which she exhibited, the willingness to wait, to put off the so-long-deferred happiness of seeing her child, rather than risk the least injury to Annette's health. There must be no surprises, Dr. Wainwright had said; no *scenes*, if such could possibly be avoided; and she understood and acquiesced at once. The news had been to her like a recall from the borders of death. She had rallied almost into health; her dark eyes were full of bright content, and the wistful look had left her face. How keenly Dr. Wainwright felt the extent and importance of the error he had been led into by accepting the fiat of his predecessor upon the "case" of Madame Vaughan, when he found the poor prisoner of so many years perfectly tolerant of the error, and gently grateful for her secluded life!

"I have been as happy as it was possible for me to be without my child," she said; "and George has been like a son to me. All has been well."

It was the night before the double wedding, which was to be a very quiet affair. The brides were inspecting their bridal dresses, displayed upon Annette's bed. They formed a pretty picture, amid the shiny white, the graceful flowers, the suggestive trifles

of ornament and luxury around. Daisy was incomparably the handsomer; but her newly-found health and happiness had much beautified Annette.

"Mamma has told us what she is going to do at last," said Daisy. "She has settled it all with Dr. Wainwright, and her mind is quite made up. It seems Miss Marshall, the lady superintendent of the Doctor's asylum, is going to be married to the resident doctor, and resigns her post. Mamma is going to take it; she likes the work" (Daisy spoke quickly, and with her eyes averted from Annette), "and Dr. Wainwright thinks she will be invaluable to him. So she is to go there to-morrow afternoon. I don't *quite* like it; but she is determined, and the omnipotent doctor well pleased."

"It is an occupation in which she will be happy and most useful," said Annette; and she kissed her friend gravely. "I *know* how fitted for it she is. It would be well for all the afflicted ones, if such care and judgment as hers might always come to their aid."

The conversation of the two girls was interrupted at this point, perhaps to their mutual relief, by the entrance of a servant who brought Daisy a letter. She did not recognise the hand. It was not Paul's; whom, indeed, she had parted with just an hour before. She glanced first at the signature; it was "John Merton." The brief letter contained these words:

"I have heard the news of your good fortune, and of your intended marriage, and I can bear to write and congratulate you on both. From what I could not have endured I have been preserved; and you?—few have such a rescue to remember with gratitude. If I intrude its memory ungracefully on such an occasion, forgive me; it is because I would make you realise thankfully that *three* lives have been saved. As the wife of another, a happier and worthier man, as the mother of his children, I can think of you with resignation for myself, and the rejoicing of a true and unselfish love for you; and though I do not think I shall ever love any woman in all my life again, I can wish you joy, and say from my heart, God bless you!"

Daisy stood with the letter in her hand, pale and thoughtful, tears shining in her brilliant eyes.

"There's nothing wrong, is there, dear?" asked Annette softly.

"Nothing; it is only a greeting from an old friend." After a pause, she said thoughtfully: "It is good to have had such knowledge of life as I have had—I mean for one like me—knowledge which would have done *you* nothing but harm, and made you wretched; good to have the means of measuring one's happiness by what one has escaped."

Soon after, and with Daisy's grave manner unaltered, the girls parted for the night.

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On the heights above the broad stream formed by the confluence of the Rhone and the Saone there are many beautiful villa residences, whose classic architecture harmonises well with the associations with the ancient Roman rule, which invest the spot with a charm even beyond its picturesqueness. From the lofty-pillared façade, and deep cool porticos, terraced gardens, thick set with trees of southern growth, descend to the verge of the height, arrested there by crenulated walls, overgrown with a glorious tangle of roses and laurels, of jasmine and clematis and passion-flower—the luxuries of our northern clime, but common there.

The long ranges of windows in the front of these scattered mansions look out upon the dim distant Alps; those to the back upon the vineyards of the Lyonnais, and the rich and spacious plains of Dauphiné. The scene retains the historic interest of the past in the midst of the refined and cultivated beauty of the present. Amid this beauty George Wainwright and his wife were to make their home; and thither they turned their steps within a week after their marriage. They had travelled by carriage-road from Dijon, George taking pleasure in pointing out to his wife the scenes, which were all familiar to him—all equally novel and delightful to her.

"I am getting anxious about our villa," he said, when only a few miles lay between them and their destination. "I had a

general notion of what they are like, but I never saw this one. Mathieu is a capital man of business, however; and I think, if it be ever safe to do a thing of the kind through an agent, we are safe in this instance."

"I am certain to like it, George; you need not fear that; and I shall soon get over the strangeness of having to look after my own affairs. Only fancy the happiness of settling down in my first home with you! The servants will be a difficulty; they won't understand *my* French, I'm afraid."

"What would you say, Annette, if you found a most competent housekeeper there already—a lady whom my father has known for many years, and has selected and sent out in advance, to have everything ready for you—what would you say?"

"That it is like the wisdom and kindness of your father. But you seem to imply that this lady came from London. Why did I not see her there? Would it not have been better that we should have been acquainted in the first instance?"

"No, my darling; my father thought not. He had good reason. We are rapidly approaching our home, my own wife" (George encircled her with his arms as he spoke), "and I have something to tell you which you could not have borne until now. It is joyful news, Annette. Can you bear to hear it from me?"

She looked at him fearlessly, with a candid trusting gaze, which touched him keenly.

"I can bear any news, good or ill, which is told me by you; which I am to hear held in your arms, George."

"You remember my telling you about my dear old friend, Madame Vaughan—*Maman*, as she loved that I should call her?—and how you wanted to be taken to see her, and my father said No?"

"I remember," said Annette. "Is she the lady, George? Is she quite well? I shall be so glad if it is so—if this is the delightful surprise you have had in store for me."

"She is the lady, darling; but there is more than this to tell you. Do you remember that *Maman* had a delusion, as we thought it; was always wearying and pining for a child,

complaining that she had been robbed of her, but patiently declaring her belief that she should see her again in this world?"

"I remember," said Annette, still keeping her fixed earnest gaze upon her husband. "Has it turned out that this was no delusion? Has she really a child? has the child been found?"

"The child is living; her child has been found, and I am taking her home to her." George Wainwright pressed his wife closely to his breast, and spoke the remainder of the sentence in a whisper:

"You are that child, my Annette. Oh, be calm and strong, for the sake of the husband's love which brings you to a mother's."

* * * * *

"Letters from England!" exclaimed Annette on a fine spring day in the early new year, starting up from the terrace, on which she had been sitting with her mother, to meet George, who was coming leisurely from the house with a bundle of papers in his hand.

"Yes, letters from England; and lots of them. Here's your share; I'll talk to *Maman* while you read them."

Annette crammed all the letters but one into the pocket of her smart little apron, and walked slowly to and fro reading the exception, while George took her place beside Madame Vaughan.

But they did not talk; they were both looking at Annette. She had read one letter and begun another before either spoke. Then George said:

"My father is so delighted with my report, he declares he will come to Lyons himself, in the autumn. Well, what is it?" to Annette, who ran up to them laughing.

"Oh George, such fun! There's such a charming letter from Daisy. The 'season' has begun; and she is going out tremendously; and she says—but you shall read it all by-and-by—that the fine ladies are very civil, and have not the faintest notion that she is in the secrets of their 'get-up,' and tried on their bonnets and fripperies only last year. And Paul is 'no

end of a good fellow'—he shouldn't teach Daisy slang like that, should he, George? And they *are* so happy, and they will come to us at the end of the season. I'm so glad. I don't know anything about the season; I've an idea it's an awful nuisance."

"I have an idea you had better read your letters, and not keep *Maman* waiting for her drive," said George gaily.

She flitted off again, and George returned to the subject of his father's letter.

"He reminds me how he doubted her recovery on account of the uncongenial, interested *borné* atmosphere of her home, and its dearth of affection and geniality. He is never wrong, *Maman*, never. In Annette's case, the natural remedy, home, love, healthy occupation, children—or, let us not be presumptuous, say the prospect of them—have been successful. The only sentimental aphorism I ever heard my father use is the truest—'Love is the best physician.' He is always right, *Maman*."

"Almost always," replied Madame Vaughan. "He has been perfectly right in this instance; and, indeed, the only mistake I ever knew him to make was in my case, when I was Dr. Wainwright's Patient."

THE END.

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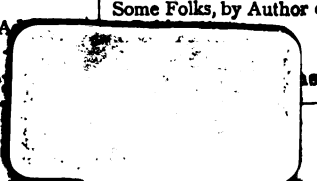

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